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BEADLE & ADAMS, Publishers, 98 William St., New York.

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OR,

THE TRACK OF THE AVENGER.

BY JOS. F. HENDERSON

NEW YORK
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CHAPTER I.

GONE! GONE!

FAR away beyond the verge of civilization—far away toward the setting sun, on a broad western prairie, where the red-man held sway over the land, and roamed without restraint—stood the solitary habitation of Alfred Grey.

It was a common log-cabin, but a well-constructed one, proving that its owner had erected it with a view to a somewhat lengthy stay; and the strong double roof that covered it, and the loop-holes that pierced its solid walls, also told you that the builder was aware of the dangers of the country in which he had settled, and had an eye to easy defense.

A belt of woodland stretched away in the rear, while in front was one of the prettiest of little lakes. Of miniature proportion and placid surface—margined here with mossy banks, there with strips of timber, and yonder in the distance with huge, rocky bluffs—it lay calmly, reflecting the blue dome of heaven like Nature's choicest mirror.

It was near the close of a golden summer's day, in the leafy month of June. The pleasant evening breeze, drifting gently down from the far-distant mountains, was laden with the delicate perfume of wild-flowers, and the sun, having finished his day's journey, was sinking to rest behind the bluish peaks that were dimly outlined in the western horizon. The lake, now that it was relieved of the sun's rays, resembled a sheet of polished steel, lying there so quiescent and translucent that the surface could scarce be seen.

Sitting in the open door of the cabin was a man; a rather

ungainly specimen of humanity, and quite a comical-looking individual at the best.

His hat was pushed back, revealing the fiery red hair that stood like bristles over his forehead. He wore a green-baize jacket with two stiff little tails in the rear, invisible from the front, while the upper portion of his limbs were protected by corduroy knee-breeches, with rows of glittering brass buttons extending down the outside seams. Long black stockings made the proper connection at the knee, and low shoes, of that style denominated "pumps," protected his feet. There was a comical twinkle in his small blue eyes, and his countenance wore that devil-may-care expression peculiar to his race. For, as may have been inferred from the description, he was an Irishman, and a fair representative of the Emerald Isle he was. His name was Larry O'Lynn, and he had long been the faithful and trusted servant of his master, Alfred Grey.

In front of him, a short distance down the path, was a second person, sitting on a stone. This was a young and beautiful girl, scarcely seventeen years old, with midnight tresses floating about her shapely head in luxuriant masses. Her lips seemed made to kiss; her cheeks resembled the rosy side of a peach; and her velvet black eyes were large and lustrous, while there was something like sadness in their dark depths just now, that stirred the soul with compassion.

She held a guitar in her hands. Her white, taper fingers were tripping lightly over its strings, arousing sweet melody therefrom, and her clear, birdlike voice accompanying it rose with wild, enchanting music on the evening breeze, floating over the waters with such beautiful, rippling cadences that all nature seemed hushed to listen; while the woods found a tongue and took up the song, echoing each modulated strain, softly, faintly, as though fearful of disturbing the fair singer. And Larry O'Lynn fairly held his breath as he listened, patting his feet, snapping his fingers, and half whistling to the affecting music.

The maiden's name was Adalyn Grey, called by the Indians "Lily of the Lake." And well deserved she the latter name, as you would have thought could you have seen her as she sat there in the tinted twilight, the last feeble rays of the setting sun kissing her rosy cheeks and soft, flowing hair.

She was looking steadily out upon the sleepy waters. A tiny canoe was visible far away, floating like a shell on the unruffled bosom of the lake, containing a single occupant who was impelling it toward the shore. This was her father, Alfred Grey, the recluse, who had so long lived there in that wild, secluded spot, seldom leaving his home save to occasionally take a morning ride over the prairie. It was Alfred Grey, whom no one seemed to know, other than that he was a singular, reticent man whose name was Alfred Grey, and whose name was not unfrequently coupled with wondering remarks, in regard to his past life. Though there was a fort within a mile of his abode, yet he was seldom or never seen there, always sending his man Larry, when he wished to procure some necessary articles from the post.

He was now returning after a short hunting-excursion, and Adalyn was welcoming him with one of her sweetest songs, and guitar accompaniment, just as she always did when he returned home by water.

Had you been near enough, however, you would have seen that the hunter's face did not light up with a fond smile as it usually did when that far-off music was wafted to his ear. On the contrary he turned deathly pale, and a dark cloud settled down on his broad, intellectual brow. Rapidly, nervously he plied the oar, and the frail bark shot forward like an arrow, while its occupant kept his piercing orbs fastened upon the fair being on the shore, who still sung on, unconscious of the danger that threatened her.

He scanned the shores on either side with a frightened, expectant air, plying his single oar faster and faster, and making the boat fairly skim along in the direction of the shore where sat the one so dear to him. Darkness was fast coming on. The bright trace of the luminary in the western sky was fading away, and the soft shades of twilight were gradually yielding to the dark shadows of night.

"Adalyn—Adalyn!"

The deep, hoarse voice of Alfred Grey went thundering over the water in tones of deep distress. Then silence reigned and Adalyn could be seen to rise from her seat and stand gazing at her father as if in silent wonder.

"Adalyn, get thee in the house! Haste, girl! Why stand

you there!" he wildly cried, using the strong ashen paddle with renewed vigor.

Alas! too late. A loud, prolonged whoop—a savage, blood-curdling war-cry, as from a score of throats, at that moment rent the air; and the strong man sunk despairingly back upon his seat, clasped his hands and groaned aloud.

Sitting there with blanched face, wet with perspiration, he saw dusky figures flitting hither and thither like evil spirits, around his defenseless home, while their shouts of exultation were mingled with two or three reports of firearms following each other in rapid succession. He saw violent hands laid upon his daughter, and was powerless to help her. He saw her lifted in the brawny arms of a big, muscular Indian, and heard her wailing cry for help as the merciless monster bounded away with her!

"Father! oh, father!" she screamed, throwing her hands aloft, and as the pleading wail was borne to his ear he gave utterance to a fierce exclamation, and snatched up his gun from the bottom of the boat.

But he did not discharge it. In fact, he saw nothing at which to discharge it. The savages, one and all, had disappeared as if by magic!

The attack, the capture, and the disappearance had occurred in an incredibly short space of time. A silence like that of death succeeded, and in the midst of it we look again upon the scene, and behold the picture changed. The cabin is the same as before, standing there entirely unharmed, and out upon the lake can still be seen in the growing darkness the approaching canoe with its single occupant. But where is the fair maiden who sat upon the shore, touching the guitar with magic fingers, and filling the perfumed air with sounds like angel music? Where is she? Crushed and forever hushed the instrument lies upon the earth, near the spot where she had sat but a moment since, and never again will those lily fingers glide over its quivering strings. She is gone!

Larry O'Lynn is still on the spot, though no longer sitting on the door-step. He is leaning up against the house now, exhausted and bewildered, with a smoking pistol in his hand, and the crimson blood trickling from a slight wound in his left ear, very sad because his young mistress had been stolen

away, but conscious that he had done all that was in his power to prevent it.

Alfred Grey landed, drew the boat upon the bank, staggered forward a few paces, straining his eyes through the darkness; then stopped and raised his hand to his forehead with a low moan.

"Gone! gone!" he groaned. "Gone, nevermore to return. Torn from her home and the father who worshiped her, by those fiends in human form, who will dance with hellish delight to see her young life ebb away. Why am I doomed to life-long misery? What have I done, that God should allow misfortune to follow in my very footsteps, from my birth place to my grave? Surely it was enough when she, my wife, was taken from me; but now that I have been robbed of my child, my only comfort on earth—oh, God! this is more than I can bear! Let me also die!"

It was a sad sight to witness the great sorrow of that bereaved father. It is touching, at any time, to behold a strong man cast down with grief, and he *was* a strong man, of Herculean proportions.

His wandering glance alighted on the Irishman, leaning silently there against the house. Instantly his fine features became distorted in a fierce scowl, and clutching his long rifle with both hands, he strode forward, as though about to annihilate the inoffensive fellow.

"Cowardly rascal!" he hissed, furiously, through his clenched teeth. "You might have prevented this, had you possessed the courage of a chicken! Why stood ye here, like a mummy—a fool—a helpless baby, and see Adalyn carried away by those murderous heathens?—carried to her ruin—to her death! Speak, trembling wretch, ere I crush you to the earth!"

Larry drew himself up to his full height, and returned unflinchingly the burning gaze of his master.

"Stand back, sur," said he. "It's mad ye are now, Mither Grey, an' when yer in that condition, jist, it's not me as 'll do yer biddin'! Ye've called me a coward, ye hev, an' it's not the likes of yez, at all, that should be afther callin' me that, when it was me own silt as did ivery thing I c'u'd to save the dear craythur. Ye'll oblige me, sur, by lukin' at me lift ear, where I was wounded, sur, be wan iv them nagura

But, didn't I return as good as he give, I don' know? I had nothin' to shoot wid but this blessed pistol, an' I shot the chap in the thigh wid it; but they all got away, though. What more c'u'd I do? An' yit yez thriten to knock me into the middle iv next week 'cause I didn't do more. Yer mad, now, an' I'm not yer sarvint whin yer mad. Be the howly Vargin, if ye so much as lays a hand on me, it's yer own dear silf, I'm thinkin', as'll rue the day yez iver attempted to disturb the equilibrium iv Bridget O'Lynn's son, from Galway."

And Larry was undoubtedly in earnest, as his hard-set teeth, and his look of cool determination testified.

"Halloa, there, Alfred Grey!" shouted a voice, at this juncture, and the man and his servant whirled round simultaneously, clapping their hands on their weapons as of one accord.

Who had spoken? It was soon obvious to both that the intruder was not an enemy.

A horseman had ridden up unobserved, and come to a halt within a few yards of the spot where they were standing, near the door of the hut.

The horse was a powerful coal-black charger, and the rider, sitting erect on his back with as much ease and grace as though he were born to rule the fiery animal, was plainly visible in the soft light of the moon, that streamed down upon him in a flood of tempered radiance.

He was a young man and quite handsome, with regular, finely-cut features, a flock of chestnut hair, dark mustache, and air that was free from arrogance, yet commanding withal, giving him the appearance of being older than he really was.

He was clad in the habiliments of a military officer. A saucy-looking foraging-cap partially concealed his chestnut curls, and a dark-blue coat, with the shoulder-straps of a captain, was buttoned closely about his handsome figure. Besides the tight-fitting buck-skin breeches he wore, his limbs claimed the additional protection of a pair of high-topped boots. A sword dangled at his side, a brace of serviceable pistols peeped from the holsters of his saddle, and a pair of large cavalry-spurs clasped the heels of his boots.

Such was Captain Roger Wayne, commander of a company

of rangers, stationed at the well-garrisoned frontier-post a mile distant from the solitaire's cabin.

He had been to the cabin several times before to warn the mysterious owner of danger, and on all occasions had had the good fortune to see the lovely Adalyn. Wayne was naturally delighted at meeting such a beauty in that wild, uncivilized country.

CHAPTER II.

THE COLLOQUY IN THE CLEARING.

ALFRED GREY had lived in that secluded spot by the lake-side for five long years. No one knew whence he came, nor why, and no one ever tried, with any degree of success, to become acquainted with him. But it was whispered about at the fort, shortly after his arrival in that neighborhood, that there was a mystery connected with him. There were vague intimations that his wife had been taken from him by foul means, and that his emigration to the West was not without a purpose, though none could tell where these whispered reports originated.

Those who had seen his child—and many had passed his lonely hut for the sole purpose of seeing her—talked a great deal about her, and remarked that if he had lost a wife as beautiful as she, it was no wonder he was sad and reticent. Some had endeavored to draw Larry O'Lynn into conversation concerning his master and his past life; but when Larry had modestly informed one of his interrogators that “he’d trape both his eyes in mournin’, jist, ef he sed another word bout his masther,” they prudently refrained from saying more in the presence of the Galwegian.

As time rolled on, and the sweet, lovable Adalyn approached mature age, and began to exhibit signs of budding womanhood, it was said that she daily grew more and more charming.

Then the marriageable young men of the settlement began to entertain strange ideas, and lay awake of nights, and

wonder if it were possible to win this matchless flower of the prairies, since they did not dare to visit her father's house. And some of them, when they found that she sallied forth almost every morning, with her favorite white horse for a gallop over the country, found it necessary to their health to take a short ride themselves at the same hour, and sometimes they would be fortunate enough to meet the fair rider, and exchange a few words with her, in regard to the weather, etc.

But she was timid, poor thing, unaccustomed as she was to the society of others, and she would never pause to converse with any of her ardent admirers. Yet she possessed a fine education. Her father had devoted much time to her instruction, and bountifully supplied the necessary books, so that ere she had attained the age of seventeen years, she was accomplished and refined, fluent in speech, and pretty much of a linguist.

Captain Wayne, of the mounted rangers, though little caring for female society, was considerably struck by her appearance, and could not help thinking that dangerous, unsettled region, was an unfit place for such as she. He thought, too, that any man might be proud of such a treasure, and the more he saw her and thought of her, the more increased his interest in her, till at last his heart had flown to her keeping. He chided himself for this, however, for he could not hope to call her his while her father lived. He knew Alfred Grey too well for that, though he had done him many a kindness, by riding to his cabin at the risk of his own life, to apprise him of danger, when the Indians were on the war-path. On such occasions the strange man would thank him coldly, and make preparations for defense, when the warning was needed, which was not always the case. But he grew to love Adalyn madly and he felt that he would rather lose his life than lose her.

When Alfred Grey and Larry, startled by the voice, beheld in the moonlight the young captain of rangers, they both stood waiting silently for him to speak, certain that it was a friendly mission which had brought him there.

Roger Wayne touched his cap, saluting the gentleman in true military style, and then riding up nearer to the silent ~~re-~~ cause and his silent servant, he said :

"Sir, you are probably surprised to see me here at this untimely hour, but I have come with the hope, that by so doing I might render you a service."

"Well?"—coldly and stoically uttered.

"The Pawnees, sir, are on the war-path! Two of our most worthy scouts came in this afternoon, and reported a large band moving in our direction, while signs of others are visible everywhere."

Alfred Grey stamped his foot, waved his hand, and turned toward the house.

"This certainly is, sir, as you have said, an untimely hour to bring us that report," he muttered, gruffly, as he moved toward the door of the cabin.

"Stay!" called the captain. "Tell me what you mean?"

"I mean," he replied, pausing, and turning again toward the horseman, "I mean that your kindness has come too late."

"Ah! you have detected 'sign' then?"

"Would that it were only that!" was the sad response.

"What, have you suffered from the hands of the red villains?" inquired the young ranger, casting a searching glance around for Adalyn, as the truth began to dawn on his mind.

"Suffer, did yez say?" exclaimed Larry. "Mither iv Moses! an' it's that same question ye'd not be askin', sure, ef yez had been here a few minnits back."

"What has happened? Have they paid your house a visit?"

"Who?"

"The Indians, to be sure; the Pawnees.

"Don' know whether they was Paw-knees, or Claw-knees, but sartin I am, sur, that yer humble sarvint shot wan iv 'em somewhere in the region iv the knee!"

"What harm did they do?" asked Captain Wayne moving impatiently in his saddle.

"What harrum, d'ye ask? Och, wirrah! wirrah! c'u'dn't ye guess? They have wint an' carried away—"

"Adalyn Grey!" almost shouted the young man.

"The same, yer honor. I tried me cussedest to bate 'em off, bad 'cess to 'em, but divil a wan iv 'em w'u'd retire widout their booty. Wan iv their bullets grazed me lift ear,

an' wan iv mine tuck effect in a rid nagur's leg, makin' him march off like a raw recruit, thryin' to kape step to the tap of a dhrum."

"And--and she--she is gone," cried the alarmed officer.

"Yis, gone," repeated the Irishman, lugubriously.

"Ay, gone!" groaned his master, in a choked voice.

And for a moment there was a deep silence in the open glade, in front of that prairie home; there in the darkness of night, that was relieved by the pale light of the moon shining down from the clear blue sky above. For a moment nothing could be heard but the breathing of the three men, who were silent as statues, in contrast with the great tumult that was going on in their heaving breasts.

Then, with a deep sigh, Captain Wayne leaned forward in his saddle, and in a husky voice, broke the silence:

"Will you tell me, sir, how this came about? Perhaps I can be of assistance to you."

"I fear assistance will be of no avail," faltered the unhappy father, speaking less coldly than ever before to the man who had so often befriended him. "I was over on the opposite side of the lake, shooting ducks for pastime, when I first discovered indications that the enemy was near. No sooner had I made the discovery, than I started for home, but I reached it just in time to be too late. While yet I was a short distance from the shore, the Indians made their appearance. They captured my child, and came within half an inch of slaying my good man, Larry, and all was over ere I could reach the shore."

"Did they harm the girl?"

"Nary a harrum," answered the Irishman. "They didn't even seem disposed to do her any harrum, an' the Lord knows I hope they won't, while they're parmitted to kape her."

The handsome young soldier sat silently on his horse for awhile, looking thoughtfully away into the surrounding gloom. Then, as a shadow swept over his fair, open brow, he inquired:

"Are you sure they were all Indians, my friend?"

The Hibernian looked up with a puzzled air.

"What div yez mean?" he drawled out.

"That there might have been a white man among the assailants!" meaningly rejoined the other.

Larry reflected an instant.

"Bedad, now," he cried, "an' wasn't it that very same bla'guard, sure, that captur'd Adalyn, who struck me very forcibly as lukin' different from the rist? Painted an' drissed like an Injun he was, but fur all that, he looked more to me like a white man than a rid man."

"Was he a heavily-built person?"

"Yis, sur, yer honor."

"Tall, active, and well-formed?"

"The very same, begorra."

"Then I think we may safely conclude that he was no other than—"

"Who?" exclaimed Alfred Grey, taking a step forward, as though fearful of losing the name.

"Kyle Bernard."

"If that is his name, it is not he," he muttered to himself.

"His first name was Conrad, and his last—"

"I say, Mr. Grey," broke forth Roger Wayne at that instant, "Kyle Bernard, the White Warrior, is a noted renegade who has long lived with the Pawnees, and if your daughter has fallen into his hands I tremble more for her safety than I otherwise would. For that reason allow me to make a proposition. Know, then, that I have dared to love your daughter, and—"

The father looked up with an expression that at once betrayed his astonishment and displeasure.

"Please hear me through," continued the speaker, undaunted. "Is it any fault of mine that I should love her when she took my heart by storm? I could not help it, but, though confident that I could be to her all that a husband should be to the wife of his bosom, yet never until now have I hoped to one day possess her."

"And why do you now?" cried the hunter, in an angry voice, stalking forward and standing beside his interlocutor.

"I will tell you, sir," and the young horseman looked calmly down upon the frowning face upturned to his. "I will tell you. Judging, from certain indications, that the feeling which has taken possession of me is, to some extent,

reciprocated, I have concluded that could your consent be gained hers would quickly follow."

"Well, mine, sirrah, will never be gained!" loudly ejaculated the man, stamping his foot with rage.

"Divil a gain," murmured Larry.

"And hark ye, lad," he continued, laying one hand upon the knee of the youth, and hissing his words through clenched teeth. "If ever again you bring up this subject; if ever again you speak a word to me about taking from me my darling Adalyn—about depriving me of the sweet companionship of the only one who loves the unfortunate being that is addressing you—then, by the gods, will I crush you as I would the lowest worm that—"

"Hold, my friend; hold, I pray you," interrupted our hero, for as such we would have you regard him. "Compose yourself until you have heard my proposition. Will you give me your daughter to wed if I return her to you alive and well within three days of this time? Now, do not answer my question until you have composed yourself and reflected sufficiently with a clear brain, and then speak at the dictation of your feelings. You probably think me a poor adventurer. True, I am an orphan and poor, but I am young, healthy and willing to work. My only object in coming out here was to do something for my country. I am satisfied that I have done something for it, and am also satisfied that I shall do more. Be reasonable now in your answer, and bear in mind that if she does become my wife she shall never be taken from you."

The proud lip of the listener curled at the conclusion of this speech, and the proud man himself seemed on the point of making some indignant reply. But he did not. He relapsed into silence, his features became composed, and for some time he stood still, gazing down at the ground. Then he drew a long breath and raised his head, and that look of mingled contempt and indignation was gone.

"Sir," he said, taking the captain's hand, "your proposition is more reasonable than I at first thought, and I accept it. You are in love. I know well how to sympathize with you. However, I think it were better that I should accompany you."

THE TRACK OF THE AVENGER.

The countenance of the ranger did not betray the wild joy that these coldly-spoken words sent to his heart, but the pressure of his trembling hand upon that of Alfred Grey did. And so did his voice as he said :

"Thank you, sir; thank you! But no, my friend, I think it were better that you should remain quietly at home and let your man there accompany me. He will be of as much service to me as you could possibly be, and as I have the good fortune to be well versed in prairie craft, I have great hopes of success. Another great reason why you should stay at home is this: by going with me you would endanger your life and probably be killed; and think, what would be the feelings of your poor Adalyn were I to restore her to a dead father? Tarry here, sir, for her sake."

Captain Wayne could not have chosen more fitting words to make an impression on Alfred Grey, and the eyes of the latter softened as they looked with a kind of wild longing into those of the ranger.

"Your argument is sound. I will stay," he muttered; adding immediately: "But do you intend going alone?"

"No, if you will permit that fellow to go with me?"

"Hurroo! that's the talk!" shouted Larry, springing up and cracking his heels together, at the same time casting an inquiring glance at his master.

"But shall you not take your rangers?"

"Not a single one of them, sir, as I think it would be more prudent to follow the Indians stealthily and *steal* the girl from them."

"Nor an experienced hunter?"

"No, I will not, for the reason that I myself am considered skillful a scout as any that are now at the fort, and that gives me a great deal of confidence in myself."

"I'm the b'y as ought to be afther goin' wid him," declared Larry, tipping his hat on one side of his head and assuming an air of utmost importance.

"Yes, he is the man I want, on account of his courage and strength," said Wayne.

"Then you are at liberty to take him. But stay; 'tis not your intention to start before morning?"

"It assuredly is. We start to-night as soon as we can get

off, and move round to the western shore of the lake. But I must first return to the fort and leave my horse there, as he would only be an incumbrance. I don't doubt that I will be able to gain leave of absence for three days. Spring on behind me, Larry, and let us be off."

Larry did as he was directed, leaping upon the powerful horse and settling himself astride of his back just behind the saddle. The next moment the noble steed bounded away, the anger turning to wave his sword and the Irishman his hat.

Alfred Grey stood looking after them until they had disappeared in the shades of the night, and then he smote his breast with clenched hand, exclaiming:

"Recover her in three days, Captain Wayne, and she is yours, though already I've cursed the name you bear!"

CHAPTER III.

MOCKED AND MYSTIFIED.

"RECOVER her in three days, Captain Wayne, and she is yours, though already I've cursed the name you bear!"

This was what Alfred Grey said, and as he said it a strange expression settled on his face—that face so expressive of candor, sincerity, intelligence, and most of all, sorrow. It was an expression caused by the awakening of olden memories—memories of the time when came upon him the first great trouble of his life. And as he reflected, his brows contracted in a menacing frown; then his lip quivered and his eyelids drooped; and then he ground his teeth with a look of terrible vindictiveness.

He was alone now—entirely alone. Adalyn was gone, and Larry was gone, and how probable it was that neither of them would ever return to him. If they never should, or if Adalyn should be put to death by her inhuman captors—here Alfred Grey glanced down at the ugly-looking knife suspended at his side, with fearful significance!

"If she returns not to me alive, then have I nothing more to live for!"

And then he stood silent again before his cabin door, the moonbeams falling softly upon his bearded face and broad, massive brow, unshadowed by the brimless wolf-skin cap he wore. Leaning upon his long rifle as motionless as though he was petrified, and as silent as the darkness around him, the gentleman hunter was forgetful of all else in the profound reverie he had fallen into.

"Restore her to me," he kept repeating to himself, "and she is yours, though how repugnant to my pride is the very thought of wedding my dear child to one of that name! I have cursed the name of Wayne, and were it not for the fact that you, Captain Roger, have proved yourself the very reverse of him whom you have honored with the title of father, then would I rather see my darling die than accept your proposition!"

Relieved of this speech he was once more quiet, and he once more stood like an immovable specter dimly outlined against the cabin walls. The cabin resembled a tomb, dark, gloomy and quiet, and the dusky, shadowy figures that might have been seen flitting noiselessly backward and forward behind it like spirits of the dead, did not lessen the resemblance. A deep silence, positively awful, brooded over the spot, the intensity and solemnity of which seemed only increased by the faint, monotonous sound of the water washing the beach, and the low murmur of the night-wind as it rippled gently through the foliage of the majestic cottonwood tree that towered above the rear portion of the house.

All on a sudden Alfred Grey started, with a slight exclamation, and stood erect.

His eyes, fastened upon some object straight ahead, began to flash with a strange fire, and his fingers to work nervously about the lock of his gun.

"Ha! what's that I see?" he exclaimed. "A light, as sure as I live—a fire out upon the island!"

Such was in reality the case.

Out in the center of the lake was a small, rocky island, rising abruptly from the water to a height of some twenty feet from the surface; a rough, barren spot, with no verdure except some scrubby bushes and a few clambering vines. On this island was a cave which the recluse had accidentally discovered in his wanderings, and which might not be found were a per-

son to explore the place again and again. It was nearly in the very middle of the lake, and for that reason was known as "Center Bluff."

On Center Bluff, then, was the light that startled Alfred Grey as he stood looking thoughtfully in that direction. On Center Bluff he saw the glimmering camp-fire that put an end to his cogitations, and caused him to instinctively finger the lock of his rifle.

We say camp-fire, though it was not evident that such it was. It more resembled one of the bright stars that were then twinkling in the blue sky above, and the fact that it was fully as stationary as those celestial luminaries made it seem unlike a torch. Ever and anon it seemed suddenly extinguished, remaining thus only a second at a time, as some person apparently passed before it.

The conclusion arrived at by the hunter was that a party of Indians had repaired to the island and kindled a fire with the intention of passing the night there—probably the party that stole Adalyn.

"I wonder if it is?" he meditated. "I wonder if they are the bloody dogs who stole my child away? Heathens! brutes! fiends! would that I had the power to crush your whole race beneath my heel!" and he shook his fist at the supposed savages like a madman. "Perhaps Adalyn is with them there," he resumed, after a pause, "bound hand and foot, and lying half dead on the hard stones beneath the feet of her vile enemies. Yes, it must be so, and these are left to guard her, while the others have moved on to the fort to join in the attack that is likely to take place there. By heavens, I must not stand here, when the poor girl is in all probability so near to me. I'll— Ah!"

The sharp report of a rifle rung out on the night-air, and the startling sound was closely followed by that of a bullet whistling past him uncomfortably near his head!

Then footsteps were heard, and whirling quickly round to meet the foe, he beheld dusky figures gliding hither and thither, and others rushing toward him. They were enemies—they were Indians, and he was there alone, attacked by overwhelming numbers of them, with no friend near to help him, and comparatively powerless to help himself.

On turning round, however, he took in every thing at a glance, and with laudable self-possession decided on the instant how he should act. Savage yells were now filling the air, and a tomahawk was hurled at him, burying itself in the rich soil near where he stood, proving that they were coming upon him with deadly intent, and that he must act quickly if he would act at all.

"Down with him! Down with the infernal brute!" yelled a hoarse voice in good English, and even in that critical moment Alfred Grey thought of the White Warrior, whom Captain Wayne had indicated as the leader of the Pawnees.

But he could not contemplate the matter then. Time was too precious, if he wished to save his life.

The door of the hut was wide open, and he was standing within a short distance of it.

Without waiting to discharge his piece he gave one long leap forward and almost cleared the distance. But he was a little too late. One of the Indians was already on the spot, and seeing his intention, sprung before the white man and stood between him and the house, confronting him. This cut off his retreat, and of course brought him to a dead halt.

But he was still undaunted. Quick as thought his gun leaped to his shoulder, and the muzzle of it was pressed against that brawny breast.

"Take that, rash fool!" he almost shrieked.

There was a flash, a crash, a cry of mortal agony, and the ill-fated Pawnee fell across the door-step, bleeding and dead. With a shout of exultation the hunter bounded over the dead body and into the house, seized the heavy door and closed it with a bang!

The Indians were baffled.

"Curse the luck!" shouted the pale-face leader, as they all passed and stood around the corpse that lay across the stoop. "Out with your hatchets, warriors, and burst the door open! At it quickly, and see that he escapes not from any of the windows."

It was plain that the white man was the acknowledged leader of the little band, for as the mandate was given every tomahawk was simultaneously raised aloft, and every man rushed toward the entrance.

Crash ! crash ! bang ! bang ! went the glittering steel against the unyielding door, while the White Warrior stood back with arms folded across his broad chest, and one foot impatiently tapping the ground. He was a noble specimen of manly beauty, with a form full, lithe and graceful, and perfect as that of Apollo Belvidere. His face was once called handsome, but now the paint, and the demoniac scowl that was upon it, and the grinning white teeth that fairly gleamed through the jet-black beard that surrounded his mouth, rendered it repulsive.

"Stop ! hold !" he suddenly cried to the laboring braves, as he saw that their progress was much too slow on the hard oaken boards of the ponderous door.

Every man paused, dropped his uplifted hand and turned inquiringly toward the renegade.

"The windows, my brave warriors, to the windows ! Haste you to the windows, one and all, and endeavor to effect an entrance there. They perhaps are not fastened."

The Indians exchanged glances and hesitated. To enter through a window would be hazardous to him who should take the lead, inasmuch as but one could enter at a time, and the first one would in all likelihood be shot down by the hunter within. This was what they thought of, and each felt unwilling to take the lead.

"Why stand ye there, cowardly rascals !" thundered their irate commander. "If you fear a single pale-face, follow me. *I* will take the lead."

And he did. He made a leap for the nearest window, and the Indians, all ashamed of themselves for exhibiting such weakness, followed him in a body.

He opened the shutter, which was easily done. Then, with a pistol firmly grasped in one hand, he boldly climbed up on the sill and jumped in on the floor of the cabin.

All was quiet. No Alfred Grey was to be seen.

The Indians scrambled in one by one, each eager for the scalp of the man who had laid low the bravest of their number. All were silent now and cautious, for all momentarily expected to hear the death-note of one of their party rung out from the unerring rifle of the hunted man, and none desired to be selected as the target.

They searched in vain for the white hunter. A torch was lighted, and they explored again and again the three rooms the cabin contained. Yet he was not to be found. Certain they were that he had not escaped through any of the windows, for the keen-eyed, quick-eared Pawnees had been on the alert. Kyle Bernard ran to the fireplace, looked up the chimney and came away convinced that he had not chosen that place for concealment. Then there arose vociferous expressions of rage and disappointment from the baffled and chagrined crew, in the midst of which the white chief again raised his deep, stentorian voice :

“To the loft ! to the loft ! All hands to the loft, and there, by heaven, we'll find the dog !”

With this he sprung toward the rude ladder that led from one corner of the room to a small aperture above, and began to ascend it, holding a flaming torch over his head. Up he went, rapidly and fearlessly, and soon disappeared through the dark hole, while his bloodthirsty followers scrambled up pellmell behind him.

Every nook and corner of the loft underwent a scrutiny that would undoubtedly have discovered the object of their search had he been there. But he was not, and giving up the search they descended the ladder, willing to acknowledge themselves completely foiled and puzzled.

They left the house as they had entered, some of the most superstitious whispering to each other their opinion that the pale-face was no more nor less than the evil one, for what human being could vanish as he had done ?

Once more outside, the perplexed and enraged renegade crew his men around him, and thus addressed them :

“Warriors, there is no alternative but to acknowledge that we have been baffled by a pale-face. We saw him enter the house. We have ransacked it repeatedly in quest of him, but our efforts have proved fruitless. Be he man or devil he has eluded us thus far but there is yet another course for us to pursue. That it could have been possible for him to escape the but unobserved, we can hardly believe, and for that reason I am under the impression that the cunning dog is still somewhere inside of those walls. If so he shall still suffer, and that in the worst manner imaginable. In other words, he shall

burn! Come! let us set fire to the building!" he cried aloud, "and if he is still in there, which can hardly be the case, he shall be a victim of the fire! Go, gather some dry leaves and other combustibles; pile them on every side of the house and set fire to them. Haste, my braves, haste! We can not afford to lose much time in this affair."

A ringing whoop of approbation rent the air at the conclusion of this speech, and then the plumed warriors scattered in every direction to collect the combustibles necessary to the execution of their leader's plan.

For awhile, scarcely a sound could be heard. The Indians could be seen moving over the ground swiftly and stealthily like restless phantoms, their cat-like steps making no sound whatever. Armful after armful was carried to the house, till piles of dry fuel were at every corner and at every side, and then Bernard commanded them to stop.

The next order was to fire the structure. Instantly there was a scraping and striking together of flint and steel, and a flying of sparks, and in a very short time they were all on their feet again, ready to receive further directions.

The cabin was then surrounded. They were stationed around it at short intervals, and particularly enjoined to keep on the alert while the fire progressed.

"If the wretch attempts to escape, give him no quarter, but shoot him down!" was the injunction they were to obey.

Slowly—steadily—surely, the flames crept up the walls, higher and higher, until it was plain that they had gotten under good headway, and were past extinguishing. The wind was favorable. The fire began to crackle and roar, the smoke to ascend in huge volumes, and the sparks to fly high in the air. Higher, hotter, fiercer, grew the destroying element, now licking the roof, now leaping above it like thousands of fiery serpents, hissing, creeping, leaping, and wrapping themselves in mad glee around the yielding logs and boards, withering the grass around, and the leaves of the giant cottonwood that stood near.

The moon paled, the sky grew black, and in the bright, vivid light of the raging fire could be plainly seen the circle of Pawnees, all standing erect, at regular intervals around the doomed structure, silent and grim in their gaudy war-paint

and waving plumes, and every one holding a gun, bow or tomahawk ready for instant use. Yet there was no sound within, and no appearance of the besieged enemy.

Surely he must soon come, for what man would not run the gantlet in preference to standing still and waiting for a more horrible and inevitable death? The watchful guards began to grow excited and impatient, and Kyle Bernard standing in front of the cabin with his eye on the door, began to stamp his foot, run his fingers through his hair, pull his beard, and burst forth once in a while with bitter imprecations.

A few minutes later, and all hope of forcing the white man from his retreat was cast away.

The cabin was completely wrapped in flames. Not a window nor door was there that was not rendered impassable by a wall of fire. If the hunter was still within, there was no hope now for him! The Indians began to desert their posts and mingle together with the conviction that their leader was wrong in supposing his enemy was still in the house.

"The bird has flown," acknowledged the white chief suppressing with difficulty his mortification. "The slippery eel had made good his escape before we fired his home. The rascal shall yet die, and, I hope, by my hand."

At this moment they were all startled by a deep voice, proceeding, as it seemed, from the very midst of the raging fire, shouting in a tone of mockery:

"*Ha-ha-ha!* Make it warmer, ye slaves, for I am growing cold! *Ha-ha-ha!* think you that this will burn me?"

The astounded assailants glanced at one another with fear depicted on their dark countenances. To hear a voice coming from the very midst of the raging fire—surely its owner could not be mortal. The visage the White Warrior alone was free from the predominant expression of alarm.

"'Tis nothing supernatural," he said, "for the flames have not as yet filled the interior. The only thing surprising is the fact that he is still in there, since we have searched for him repeatedly, and since we have given him chances to escape."

Yet it was plain that his followers could not believe exactly as he did. They still looked dubious and uneasy, and were

evidently more than willing to retire at once from the spot. Even if the leader were right in his conjecture, that the flames had not reached the dark interior, every thing else included in the singular event went to prove to their untutored minds that the creature was not a man, but a spirit, who would destroy their whole tribe for what they had done that night.

The white chief guessed their thoughts, and though not feeling exactly easy himself, in consequence of that voice issuing from within the wall of fire, yet he would not give his impatient braves the desired order to desert the spot.

"Now it is commenced, I will see it through," he said to himself. "If the rascal is in there, as he has proved to me, I will stay and see that he burns."

And so he stood there, with form erect and arms folded, steadily watching the progress of the hissing element as it enveloped the hunter's home in a shroud of fire.

At length there was a crumbling of the burnt logs, and then, after a little wavering, one of the walls fell in. There was a loud crash, and from the dark, smoldering pile there arose a dense volume of smoke, studded with flying sparks, up into the air. Immediately there was another sound of crumbling walls, another dull crash, another ascension of smoke and sparks, as another side of the cabin went tumbling in, to increase the pile of half-consumed logs.

The White Warrior turned away, an exultant smile curling his bearded lip.

"There," he exclaimed; "if Alfred Grey is not now dead, then he need never fear hell! Ha-ha! I now stand free—fearful of no man, dreading no avenger's wrath, and with the voluptuous Adalyn, so like the Leah of yore, in my possession—he—ha-ha!—she shall—"

Here he paused and trembled. And well he might, for—hark! again that voice falls upon his ear. Again that deep, sepulchral voice is heard by the entire party, and this time it arises from beneath the heap of black and smoldering ruins!

Sad, reproachful and distinct these words came:

"Hark ye, incarnate fiend! thou hast annihilated my body, but henceforth my spirit shall haunt ye, and be an avenger at

your heels. Renegade—villain—beware ! Thou shalt yet die by the hand of thy victim !”

This was all the invisible speaker said ; and it was enough—enough, at least, to strike terror to the heart of every hearer. Quaking with fear they all stood there in the dim light of the dying fire ; all in attitudes that betokened the deepest terror, and staring fixedly at the pile of ruins, whence proceeded the voice that had addressed them, as though expecting its owner to rise therefrom in the form of a ghastly specter.

And the renegade was not an exception. He, too, started and paled, as those words addressed to him fell upon his ear, and shrinking and trembling with a strange dread, he glared expectantly at the remains of the destroyed cabin.

But they waited in vain for the appearance of a sprite, or for more to be said by the Invisible, and at last, when his great fright had left him, the Bernard drew a long breath and turned toward his followers.

He spoke not a word—opened not his mouth—but merely waved his hand as a signal for them to follow, and then, turning on his heel, walked away from the scene. His men followed in silence, their hearts, so firm and unshrinking in battle, now quaking with terror.

“ Renegade—villain, beware ! Thou shalt yet die by the hand of thy victim !”

These words seemed whispered again and again in the guilty man's ear, as he left the scene of destruction, and had one been near that pile of smoking rubbish, he might have heard a low, chuckling laugh, coming from some invisible source.

CHAPTER IV

DANGER IN DARKNESS.

“ WHISHT, cap'in, luk yandher wanst. It's a light I see on Cintur Bluff, sure, or me name isn't Larry O'Lynn.”

“ Hold, my friend ; be quiet a second and listen. There, don't you hear a noise to the left of us ?”

Captain Wayne and his companion had arrived safely at the fort, where the former left his horse, which would be of no further use to him, and obtained leave of three days' absence.

They had just reached the eastern shore of the lake, when they gave utterance to the above exclamations, the young ranger's trained ear having detected a suspicious sound, at the same time that Larry caught sight of the suspicious light previously mentioned, on Center Bluff.

The moon was no longer shining. The sky was overcast with thick black clouds, shutting out the soft radiance that had flooded the earth during the early part of the evening, and the two scouts were in a patch of timber, where it was as dark as Erebus.

"It's a footstep, cap'in," whispered Larry, listening.

"Yes, a footstep," echoed our hero, in the same low tone. "And the footstep of a single individual, if I mistake not. How is your courage? Are you willing to meet the enemy?"

"An' is it yersilf, Cap'in Roger, that w'u'd be afther callin' me a coward? How's yer own curridge, cap'in?"

"It is not dampened in the least. I think I shall be able to meet the foe."

"Yis, I should think so, whin there is only wan to mate," chuckled his companion, mischievously.

"Down, Larry, down!" commanded the ranger, and they both crouched side by side upon the ground. "The fellow, who ever he is, is not in the least too circumspect in his movements," he added, as a crackling and snapping of brushwood told them that the stranger was pushing hurriedly forward regardless of the noise he created. "If there is only one, and he discovers us, keep you still and let me manage him. If he passes within a foot of us, and yet does not see us, move not a muscle, but let him go on his way unmolested."

"Unmolested, div yer say? Begorra, now, an' is yer curridge gittin' dampened alriddy? Faith, man, ef he comes too clus, it's whackin' him over the toes wid me sthick I'll be."

"No, you will not."

"Won't, hey? See here, me b'y, I don't b'long to your kump'ny."

"But you must obey me, nevertheless, if you have any

desire to see Miss Adalyn released from captivity. We have a difficult task to perform, and we must not stop to fight unless it is absolutely necessary, although I believe you are brave, and willing to do your share when the proper time arrives. Besides, if this person is molested, he will in all probability raise a disturbance, and bring his friends to his assistance, and we will be captured at the very time that our freedom is most desirable. If we are careless, your mistress will never be liberated. If we are prudent, there is hope. Hallo! look—look!”

For, at that moment, a light flashed in their faces, dispelling the darkness that enveloped them—a light streaming through the trees, causing them to lay their hands on their weapons, and turn their eyes in the direction whence it came.

What they saw was what they expected to see: a big, brawny savage, with a torch in his hand. They could not see him distinctly, and only for an instant at a time, as he hurried on toward the water, but Captain Wayne immediately whispered in the ear of the Irishman:

“That is not an Indian. It is Kyle Bernard.”

“Who?”

“Kyle Bernard, the renegade of the Pawnees.”

“Rinegade? What div yez mane?”

“I mean that he is a white man among Indians.”

“Lives wid ’em willin’ly, I don’ know?”

“Willingly! The White Warrior!”

“Thin, be the powers, ef inybody desarves a floggin’, it is that same rinegade, and may I niver see Moll Kelley ag’in, ef I don’t take the task upon me own shoulders, wid your kind parmission, yer hōnor?”

“What, the task of flogging him?”

“Yis, yer honor.”

“Pshaw! Suppress your pugnacity for awhile. Perhaps it will come in good play, before many hours have passed.”

“Whisht! did yez hear that?” suddenly exclaimed Larry.

“I did,” replied the captain. “It strongly resembled the voice of a female, did it not?”

“Yis, an’ more. ’Twas the voic’ o’ Adalyn,” panted Larry, greatly excited.

“Are you certain it was she?”

"No, not sartin, but it sounded like the darlint, an' I wish it was her, jist, an' I'm goin' to see av it is or not."

And he made a movement as though he were about to do so.

"No, no—stay," whispered the ranger, laying his hand on the man's shoulder, and holding him in his position. "Do nothing rash if you would keep out of difficulty. If 'twas her voice we heard, she is somewhere near us, and we may search for her with a certainty of finding her. But we must wait until that rascal yonder is out of hearing, and then we can call her with safety to her and ourselves. If it is she, and pray God it is, she has probably escaped from her captors, and hid herself in the woods here."

"Luk yandher," interposed Larry. "Be the Mass! that mean rinegade is gittin' into a boat, as sure as me mother was a woman, barrin' the fact that I niver had innny mother at all."

They could see the flaring torch of the white chief down by the water's edge, and they could tell by the sounds he made, that he was entering a canoe.

A minute later, and he was rowing swiftly away from the land, out upon the dark surface of the water.

"Now is your time," said the youth.

And the two men rose to their feet, each heart beating high with the hope that the beauteous being so dear to them would soon be under their protection.

"Follow me."

Cautiously they moved through the gloomy woods, in the direction from which the supposed feminine voice had proceeded. Roger with his gun cocked and freshly primed, and Larry with his hand firmly clutching his favorite black-thorn cudgel. They had proceeded thus but a few steps, when Roger turned and paused, saying:

"Call, Larry. She will recognize your voice, if she is within hearing, whereas mine would be strange to her."

Ah! Captain Wayne, what a sea of delightful emotions would have swelled your manly bosom, had you known that your voice would have been as easily recognized, and more welcome to the ear of Adalyn Grey, than that of her father's servant!

"Don't call loud at first. Caution is the word."

"Trust me fur that, cap'in. I know what's which. Now," in a low, guarded voice: "Adalyn—Adalyn?"

They waited for an answer. None greeted their listening ears.

"Again, and a little louder," said the ranger.

"Adalyn—Adalyn."

In vain again they waited. Nothing was heard, save the sighing of the night-wind in the trees overhead, and the rippling of the water washing the rock-bound banks.

Again and again they lifted their voices, and as many times they were unrewarded by any answer, save the echo drifting back to them with a mocking wail.

"Strange," growled the disappointed lover.

"Imagination," muttered the equally disappointed Larry.

"Hardly that," dissented the captain. "It is hardly probable that we could both have imagined we heard the voice at the same time."

"Thin why ain't she to be found, I don' know?"

"Perhaps we were mistaken in supposing that the voice was hers. No—ah! I think I have it now. The white chief had her hid here. He is the man who captured her, you know. He had her in a safe place here, I'll be bound, and he is now taking her over to Center Bluff in his boat."

Captain Wayne was right.

CHAPTER V.

A LIGHT ON THE LAKE.

ALFRED GREY was not killed, as was supposed by the terrified Indians, although it was his voice coming from amid the flame that enshrouded his cabin. He was entirely uninjured, and was as sound and well after the walls of the building had fallen in as when he entered the house, pursued by his determined enemies.

After leaping over the dead body of the savage he had slain, and darting into the house to escape the bullets and

hatchets of his persecutors, his first act was to bar the door securely, in order to gain time for escape.

Next, he snatched up an old broken chisel, with remarkable self-possession, and dropping on his knees in the middle of the room, began hastily to pry up one of the boards that constituted the floor of the cabin.

This accomplished, a dark hole was disclosed beneath the floor—a dark hole, about four feet deep, at the bottom of which was water with a small canoe resting on it. Five years ago, when Alfred Grey selected that spot for the future home of himself and daughter, he selected it because of that work of nature which he discovered there. It was a long, narrow, tunnel-like cavern, extending underground to the bank of the lake, where the mouth of it was completely hidden by overhanging bushes, and with his usual quick-wittedness, he concluded to build his house over it. He thought it might be of service to him, sometimes, when in danger, and he was right, as was proved shortly after he had taken up his abode there. Now, for the second time, it was coming in good play. Once before it had been useful to him in time of danger, and in this way: A few hostile Indians had surrounded the hut with a view of capturing his daughter, who was alone inside, when he and Larry O'Lynn, who had been fishing out upon the water, entered the house by way of the subterranean passage, and defeated the assailants.

Now it afforded him a chance to escape from his enemies outside, who, enraged by the fall of a comrade, were already raining blows upon the barred door with their tomahawks.

Hastily he lowered himself into the dark cavity, and dropped down into the canoe that was moored there below.

Then he drew the loosened board into its proper place by means of a leather strap fastened on the underside, and was safe, for a time at least. He unlocked the boat, took up the oar, and was about to row down the passage, when he was checked by the patter of feet and the hum of voices overhead. He knew they had effected an entrance at the windows, and were searching for him, and he concluded to remain there for a while and enjoy their defeat. The reader is already acquainted with the result of that search.

When the building was wrapped in flames, he had removed

the boards over his head, and given utterance to the startling words which had so surprised the renegade and frightened his superstitious followers. To be sure he was grieved to see his home thus destroyed, but knowing that there was no help for it, he resolved to give the perpetrators of the deed a scare that they would remember. When the walls fell in directly over him, he shouted forth those deep-toned words previously recorded, which sent such a thrill of terror to the hearts of Kyle Bernard and his crew, and caused them to slink tremblingly away from the reviling voice, and chuckled to himself as they departed in awe from the scene of devastation they had caused.

When they were gone, he again took up the oar, and this time began to impel the boat slowly, the narrow passage extending in a straight line, as though formed by the hand of man. The roof was like an arch, the sides were damp and rugged, and the water beneath was just two feet deep.

Through this place the light vessel glided smoothly along, its occupant being at times compelled to bend his head in order to keep clear of the rocky ceiling, and at other times the way growing so narrow as to be almost impassable. Slowly, steadily, like a shadow it moved on through the channel, till at length the hunter found himself among the overhanging bushes that screened the mouth of the cavity.

Here he stopped the progress of the boat, and sat still for several minutes listening for some sound and hearing none.

Then he cautiously parted the bushes and looked forth.

Darkness enshrouded the earth. The moon was hidden from view, and thick black clouds obscured the beauty of the starry heavens. The night-wind moaned amid the branches of the giant cottonwood, and sighed as it drifted over the dark water, rippling its glassy surface; but no other sound disturbed the stillness that brooded over the country. Out upon Center Bluff the Indian camp-fire was blazing as brightly as ever, and figures could be dimly seen moving hither and thither around it. He raised his head higher, and cast a searching look around on every side.

"I believe the coast is clear," was his conclusion, as he resumed his seat. "I rather guess those fiends who came upon me with so much confidence in themselves, will not soon get

over the fright I gave them. That white man, at least, will be likely to suspect that the ghost of one of his victims is constantly hovering near him.

"Well," he added, after a pause, "I am doing no good here, and as there seem to be no enemies near, and as I have no home to shelter me, I think I shall row toward the bluff. The moon has kindly hidden her face, and under cover of the darkness I will be able to traverse the distance safely. How hope I may find Adalyn there!"

He took up the paddle, placed the end of it against the bank, and thus gave the boat a push that caused it to dart like a frightened bird out of its covert into the open air.

Now for the island. Deep the ashen paddle was driven beneath the calm surface, and thus propelled, the frail craft went skimming over the water in the direction of the rocky isle. With long, noiseless sweeps of the oar, the gentleman-hunter went riding over the silent deep like a phantom of night, his trained eye now peering anxiously through the darkness that encompassed him, and now fastened on the fire that burned like a beacon-light on the summit of the dark bluff ahead.

How he hoped he would find Adalyn there! He thought only of recovering his stolen daughter and bearing her in triumph away from her evil-minded captor, and he could not prevent a secret hope that he, instead of the young captain of rangers, might find her and release her from captivity.

"May she, so pure and innocent, never bear that hated name," he earnestly prayed. "The sight of him, or even the mention of him by other lips, awakens memories that turn my heart cold toward him."

On he sped, almost as noiselessly as a shadow.

He looked back and beheld the heap of glowing embers on the shore—the smoking remains of the ruined home shining through the deep shades of midnight.

"I can offer her no more the shelter of a home, even if a kind Providence restores her to me," he murmured, with a touch of sadness in his voice. "But I suppose we will be welcome at the fort until another cabin can be erected. Would that I could recover my child, and at the same time kill *him*! Then would I be satisfied to leave this wild country and return to the States."

At that moment he heard a low, rippling sound behind him. It was so faint that none but an experienced ear would have heeded it; but it was a *sound*, nevertheless, and the hunter was confident that he had not caused it, and yet he knew that it must have been caused by something or somebody. As his acute ear caught the low ripple, he paused and held the paddle motionless, listening.

Again he heard it. This time he quietly laid down the paddle and picked up his gun, turning his head to learn the nature of the new danger.

Behind him, within a few feet of the boat, a black object was swimming in the water. A black object whose shape he could not ascertain, but which was ostensibly following him. Some person or some animal had evidently seen him push off from the shore, and had seen fit to follow in his wake with a view of overhauling him.

Observing that he was discovered, the pursuing object came to an abrupt halt, and the head and shoulders of an Indian then became observable. Seeing that his pursuer was a human being, and one from whom mischief might be expected, Alfred Grey raised his rifle and took deliberate aim. There was a quick movement on the part of the Indian, and a long, glittering knife whizzed past him, sinking from view some distance beyond. The next instant there was a flash, and a loud report went ringing over the lake, and reverberating along the wooded shore.

And all was over. He had rid himself of his bloody-minded pursuer. The red-skin had received the contents of the heavily-charged rifle in his brain, and without as much as a groan he sunk to a watery grave.

"Fool, to follow me," thought the recluse, as he hastily re-loaded his piece. "But I'm sorry I was compelled to shoot not that I regret the taking of his worthless life—never!—but the placing of my own in imminent danger. Beyond doubt many an enemy heard that report, and if none others did on the banks around, it was certainly heard by those on the island, and that very distinctly, too."

He looked in the direction of Center Bluff. All was the same there. The guiding-star still gleamed from its summit, occasionally obscured by some passing body, but no sound

came from that or any other point, and laying his gun in the bottom of the canoe, he resumed his oar.

"I shall continue on my way at any rate," he concluded, dipping the blade with a resolute sweep. "It may be very perilous to do so, but it may be still more perilous to Adalyn if I don't, so here goes for a desperate effort."

The island was but a short distance away now, and he was rapidly nearing it. Its dark outline, looming up through the night, caused him to slacken his speed and row forward with more circumspection.

He was approaching the face of the rock. It rose almost perpendicularly from the bosom of the lake, to a height of about twenty feet, and was nearly covered with a network of clambering vines. The camp-fire above was lost to view now, as he glided up under the towering bluff, but he could still see its reflection out upon the water. The canoe grated against the base of the dark precipice, and became stationary.

Crouching under the somber shadows of the rock, he took his gun in hand and became as silent as the island itself.

The question that now arose in his mind was, what should be his next movement? He had accomplished a part of his task—had reached the island safely, but how he was to find out whether Adalyn was there or not, and how he was to release her after finding out, began to seriously perplex him.

The water gurgled dismally under the canoe, and washed the base of the rock with a mournful, monotonous sound, and the hum of voices drifting down from the bivouac of Pawnees above served to make him impatient, and yet he continued to crouch there in the darkness below the encampment of his red foes. He strained his eyes in every direction, but could discern nothing that betokened impending evil.

"This will not do," he thought. "Time is precious, and I am allowing it to slip by unoccupied. It can not be earlier than midnight, and if I accomplish any thing it must be under cover of darkness."

But what course should he take? Were it best to climb the network of vines that covered the face of the cliff, and thus reaching the summit, find himself suddenly in the very

heart of the encampment? He deemed it more prudent to pursue the latter course, and yet he decided in favor of the former. That is, he would scale the steep side of the cliff, but he would not risk climbing to the verge.

As has already been mentioned, there was a cave on the island, which Alfred Grey himself had discovered, and the secret of which he had imparted to no one. The mouth of it could be easily reached. It was directly over his head, at a distance of some eight or ten feet, and was nicely concealed by the thickly-matted vines. There he could enter unobserved, and issue forth at another entrance near the spot where the Indians were gathered.

On this decision he was about to act, when, as he gave another searching sweep around him to make sure that danger threatened from no other quarter, his eyes alighted upon something that caused him to retain his position a little longer.

A few rods distant from the spot where he was sitting, he saw a light. It was a torchlight, apparently, though it would have more resembled a star had it been above him. It was moving slowly and smoothly over the bosom of the lake, and at first he was somewhat surprised, and at a loss to understand what caused the strange phenomenon.

It looked as though a piece of combustible material was burning, and at the same time floating on the water, and yet such did not seem to be the case when he noted how steadily it progressed, showing it was not consigned to the mercy of the tide. It was undoubtedly being moved by human agency. Some Indian contrivance, in all probability.

And yet nothing could be seen but the light, and it resembled a star gliding over the lake, guided by some unseen power. Now it is growing larger. Surely it is drawing nearer to him. Yes, it really is. He now discovers that it is steadily approaching the island, and that if it swerves not from its present course it will pass within a few paces of his present hiding-place, enabling him to view it more advantageously.

Ha! what is that he hears? The sound is faint, but he recognizes it. 'Tis the dip of an oar.

His face clears.

"It is a canoe," he said to himself. "It is somebody

riding in a canoe with a torchlight. I might have known it. A Pawnee, likely, who is coming to join the party above, or is bearing a message to them."

He was right. It was a craft of some description, whose occupant, or occupants, preferred light in traveling, and that it was approaching was now self-evident. The measured dip of the oar now fell quite distinctly upon his ear.

It soon came in view, first as a dim, shapeless object moving along through the darkness, and then becoming quite distinguishable. It was a light birchen canoe, with a flaming torch of some resinous wood fastened in the prow, the red, flaring blaze casting a strange, flickering light around. It was passing now within a few paces of the hunter, and the glaring luminary revealed to his astonished gaze that which caused his dark orbs to flash fire.

A man in Indian garb occupied the bow. He was in a kneeling posture, with a long paddle in his hands, which he was using industriously, glancing up ever and anon at the beacon-fire on the summit of the crag. This was not an Indian, but that unprincipled character called Kyle Bernard. The paint had become partially rubbed off his face, which, being exposed to the bright glare of the torch, was distinctly revealed to the hunter in much of its naturalness.

At sight of the renegade Alfred Grey seemed suddenly transformed into a madman. He bent forward to obtain a closer view of that familiar countenance, and as he did so, one might have observed by the light that was cast upon him that his face underwent a startling change.

His eyes gleamed like coals of fire beneath his clouded brow; his teeth were hard set, and his bloodless lips drawn tightly over them; his breath came quick and irregular through his distended nostrils, and his fingers closed about the barrel of his gun as though he would break it in twain.

"'Tis he! 'tis he!" he exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper " 'Tis he whom I have hunted for all these long, long years I have found him at last! It is Conrad—Conrad—Ha!"

The canoe had swung 'round a little, showing him that it had another occupant besides the man in the bow. He had caught sight of a second individual sitting in the stern. This was a young and beautiful maiden, with large black eyes, pale,

sweet face, and flowing hair of a jetty hue falling in wild disorder about her symmetrical form.

In short, it was his stolen daughter, Adalyn !

She was sitting quietly in the stern, in an attitude that betokened deep depression of mind, her body slightly inclined and her head resting wearily on one white shapely hand, displaying to good advantage her wealth of hair.

Adalyn it really was, and no wonder her father, seeing her alive and so close to him, gave utterance to that exclamation of surprise and delight ; and uttered it aloud, unconsciously.

He uttered it too loud. It went to the quick ear of the renegade. That villain, ever heedful of the least sound, started up in alarm. He laid his hand on a pistol and looked expectantly in the direction whence proceeded the voice. He saw that white, ghastly face and those gleaming eyes glaring at him from out the darkness, and recognized the apparition—recognized the pale, haggard visage as that of Alfred Grey, whose house had been burned over his head but an hour since.

Like a flash came to his craven mind those ominous words :

“ Renegade, villain, beware. Thou shalt yet die by the hand of thy victim ! ”

With a low, quivering cry the terrified wretch made a sudden dash at the torch. A single second and he had flung it into the lake, where it hissed and sputtered for a moment and then died out.

Instantly all was silent and dark. The extinguishment of the friendly flame rendered the canoe and its occupants invisible in the heavy gloom that reigned, and a silence like that of death succeeded the act of the prudent villain. Though struck dumb with terror by the appearance of what he was now fully convinced was the spirit of his murdered rival, he was yet sufficiently thoughtful to place himself under cover of darkness as quickly as possible.

“ Heavens ! ” gasped the recluse, taken aback by this sudden act, “ he *must* not escape with her ! ”

He seized his paddle, and the impetus of one long, hasty stroke caused the boat to shoot like an arrow from its lurking-place. In a twinkling he was on the spot where were last seen his daughter and her captor.

But they were gone. He was foiled. Nowhere were they to be seen or heard, and not a trace of their presence was left behind them, except, indeed, a piece of floating wood, the remains of the torch that had betrayed them to the hunter. Gone! and he had felt so confident, not only that Adalyn might be recovered with scarcely an effort, but also that the handsome rival of his youth, and deadly enemy of his after years, would be an easy prey to his vindictiveness.

He listened, but could not even hear the dip of the paddle. They had disappeared rather mysteriously, making no noise by which he could obtain a clue to the direction the crafty dog had taken in his retreat.

"The monster has given me the slip!" he growled, fiercely, giving up the search in despair after beating around a little.

With compressed teeth and breathing hard with rage, disappointment and excitement, he turned about and left the spot, rowing back to his position at the base of the bluff. Gliding in under the towering rock, he again paused and sat in silent meditation.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WEIGHT OF A WARNING.

THE hunter was allowed little time to mourn over the escape of the white chief and his captive. He could not prevent a few bitter thoughts, however. He reflected: "*He* has eluded my grasp, and the thought of it maddens me. Now, after many years of patient watching and waiting, I have seen him and recognized him, and have permitted him, unnecessarily to escape my vengeance. By heaven! another opportunity shall not be thus destroyed. The villain is sailing under false colors. His name is not Bernard, but—"

And here his cogitations were interrupted.

The Indians above had been watching the torchlight of their leader as it moved over the lake like a glimmering star, and they had suspected, as the white man had, that it was one of their brethern coming to them with a message. When it

had arrived at a point below them it was suddenly extinguished, and they became aware that a slight commotion was taking place on the spot.

This had aroused their suspicions, and already they began to make a confused, clamorous noise on the verge of the bluff directly over the head of our adventurous hunter.

He could just distinguish a half-dozen heads peering over the edge. He sat perfectly quiet, watching the shadowy demons whose penetrating eyes were searching for the cause of the disturbance that had taken place almost directly under them, thinking the excitement would soon abate and give him an opportunity to make the ascent to the cave entrance.

But he was wrong. The excitement would not abate by any means so long as the Indians were in doubt as to the probable fate of him with the torch.

He heard a sort of scratching, rustling noise above him. He felt the vines trembling and swaying to and fro! One of the Pawnees had swung himself over the verge and was descending toward him! He could just see the dim, shadowy figure shaped against the sky above. It was directly over his head, and was clambering boldly down the ladder of nature that covered the entire face of the cliff, carefully but unhesitatingly, while his brethren watched him in silence. Some ambitious fellow, doubtless, who wishes to show his friends that he is a stranger to fear.

Nearer and nearer came the fearless Pawnee, the "ratlines" quivering and cracking beneath his weight as he let himself down nimbly step by step. The white man laid his hand upon a huge, glittering knife that hung at his waist, and partly drew it from his belt, keeping his now blazing eyes fastened upon the descending brave.

The daring brave arrives at the base of the cliff and comes to a halt, poising himself over the dark water, within three feet of a deadly enemy. His snake-like orbs fairly gleam through gloom that is intensified by the obscurity of the heavens, flashing hither and thither in vain endeavor to find the cause of the recent disturbance. He is within easy reach of an unseen foe—a foe crouching there at his feet like a panther about to spring, glaring fiercely at his victim, while his fingers close

firmly around the hilt of his knife, which he slowly draws from his belt.

Slowly, and with all the circumspection he could command, the white man rose from his seat, careful the while to balance himself so that the boat would not rock and disturb the stillness. Grasping a root to steady himself, he gradually straightened up until he stood erect at his full height beside the unsuspecting savage, whose restless, piercing glances ever swept clear of him. Slowly his strong arm was raised aloft, and immediately followed the final act. He took one quick step forward, the deadly steel flashed like lightning as it cleft the air—and the deed was done. A piercing shriek, prolonged and unearthly, rent the air, awakening the forest echoes and reverberating among the rocky crags that lined the lake shore, and the slain savage, relaxing his hold, fell forward with a loud splash, sinking from view to enjoy his last long rest in a watery grave, with the knife still sticking in his breast.

Without losing a moment, the hunter slung his rifle across his back, that he might have the use of both his hands, and with an upward leap, he cleared the gunwales of his canoe, and firmly grasped the stout, swaying vines.

Drawing himself up by the strength of his arms, until he could gain a footing in the rude, natural lattice-work, he began the ascent in the very faces of his enemies. Up, up, he climbed, with the agility and skill of a sailor, heedless of the confused outcries overhead, as the fallen man's comrades began to jabber and yell with angry excitement. That terrible death-cry had told them that their brother had paid dearly for his rashness, and burning to punish his slayer, they were not less delighted than astonished, to see that nimble-footed figure coming toward them up the perilous ascent. Certain that it was not their comrade returning to them, they were convinced that it was the assassinator of that comrade, though they were astounded to see him hurrying so blindly to inevitable death.

Up, still upward, sprang the determined pale-face, unmindful of the hideous cries that greeted him—unmindful of the half-score of bloodthirsty wretches, that were awaiting him with drawn weapons—unmindful of every thing except the object he was bent upon gaining.

One of the Indians, bolder than his brethren, became impatient, and anxious to obtain the first blow, resolved not to wait, but to meet the enemy half-way and give him his just dues.

With this intention, he swung himself over the verge of the rock, with a deadly tomahawk held in readiness to cleave the skull of the white man. But alas, for his inauspicious impatience, and wicked intentions! He lost his balance! He slipped, and fell! Down, down, through the air went the unfortunate heathen, tumbling over and over like a huge ball, crushing his brains out on a sharp ledge below, and then following his brother to a watery grave far down among the fishes!

While the Indians paused, speechless and spell-bound, by this second fearful result of rashness, a clear, mocking laugh rung out from the side of the cliff, where their mysterious foe was clinging to the vines. A laugh at once so maniacal and defiant, that the painted monsters could not help forgetting the fatal accident, and looking instinctively at each other, and feeling that this was truly a strange adventure.

At this juncture, there was a new-comer among the red-men. The voice of the white man shouted:

“Back, warriors! ’tis a spirit of hell that threatens you, and not a being of flesh and blood! Back, I say, for in him you have an adversary whom you can not harm!”

The voice was recognized by the hunter in his precarious position below, and as every word of the command was borne distinctly to his ear, a faint smile flitted over his careworn face. He knew it was the renegade, Kyle Bernard, who had just arrived on the ground—the detested White Warrior.

As the Pawnees drew back awe-stricken and silent, staring wonderingly at their leader, the latter stepped noiselessly forward, and looked over the precipice.

At that moment, as if to make the event perfect, the clouds parted, and the moon burst forth in all its queenly splendor, flooding the scene with a soft, mellow light. By it was revealed to the renegade’s view, a white, upturned face a few feet below him. Immediately Alfred Grey stretched one arm aloft, shook his fist threateningly, and cried, in as unearthly a tone as he could assume:

“Conrad Wayne, beware. Thou shalt yet die by the hand of thy victim!”

And scarcely had the words passed his lips, when, all of a sudden, he disappeared—*vanished* as though swallowed up by the bluff he was climbing.

The white chief staggered back as if struck by some unseen hand. That warning—that terrible warning which had been ringing in his ears like his death-knell, since it was first spoken amid the smoldering ruins of the solitaire’s cabin, now to be addressed to him again by those same lips, and in the same blood-chilling tones! He groaned, pressed his palm to his clammy brow, and thought he had been fearfully and sufficiently tortured.

He sat down upon an imbedded boulder, and buried his face in his hands, with an effort to compose himself. But he could not help thinking of the ominous words. A thousand mocking demons seemed shrieking them in his very ears. They were the same, and were spoken in the same horrible tones, as those he had heard in the early part of the evening. With the exception of one alteration. Before, he called him Kyle Bernard; now he had made use of a name by which he had not been known for years!

“Ye gods,” he cried, starting up. “Am I doomed to be haunted by his avenging spirit? Warriors,” he shouted, to the dusky group that gathered round him, “Warriors, take to your canoes! We will leave this island without delay!”

CHAPTER VII.

FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM.

As the reader may have understood, the sudden disappearance of Alfred Grey, which was so opportune in his rôle of “ghost,” was caused by his entrance into the cave previously alluded to.

He had paused to give utterance to those impressive words, which preyed so heavily on the mind of his tormentor, and

then quickly parting the vines, had disclosed a dark, oblong hole, so small that he had to enter in a stooping posture. Into this dark retreat he dodged, seeming to vanish in the air, and adding proof to what was already deemed an irrefutable fact in the mind of the terrified villain above.

On entering, he found himself in a narrow passage, and of course in total darkness. In this place of refuge, which once before was of some service to him, he found temporary safety, free from the persecutions of the hostile red-men, and at liberty to rest after the exhausting adventures he had just passed through.

The passage was short. A few steps from the entrance, he emerged into a spacious room, with a floor comparatively level and smooth. Here, after groping about a little, he produced a piece of inflammable wood, which he proceeded to ignite. This being done without difficulty, a flaring, reddish, smoky flame started up, shedding a sickly light on the surroundings, and making the hunter's face look indeed more ghostly than human. The apartment was one of considerable dimensions, with dark outlets, rough, uneven walls, and a few small stalactites visible on the damp ceiling.

The hunter, who was well acquainted with every part of the cave, moved toward a stone that formed a kind of rude, natural seat, and sat him down to think.

He thought of all that had passed since nightfall; of his first narrow escape from Bernard and his crew; of the destruction of his home, and his successful frustration of his enemies; of the little adventure on the lake, where he killed the bloody-minded red-skin, who followed him from the shore; of the meeting and recognition of his old rival and his kidnapped daughter, and the result of his thoughtlessness on that occasion; of how he stabbed the rash fellow who descended the vine-clad bluff; of the death of the second rash fellow, who was so eager to avenge his fallen brother; and lastly, of how he frightened the self-styled Kyle Bernard half out of his wits.

And as he thought of the last-mentioned individual, he ground his teeth and muttered fiercely:

"Villain! cunning villain! To think he has been near me for so many years, under the concealment of that fictitious

name, and I never have so much as suspected the truth. But, I am not yet an old man; my life is not yet spent, and, though it be years hence, the day may yet come when we shall stand face to face. Then my hand will take his wretched life, and consign his sin-blackened soul to a just retribution! Then, and never until then, can I sit quietly down and say, 'Leah, thou art avenged—I can now rest easily after the fulfillment of my vow!'

He rose from his seat, his eyes gleaming, his brows knit, his hands clenched, his whole form trembling.

"I had a dream the other night," he spoke, in deep, solemn tones. "A Gipsy hag was telling my fortune, and what she said is so plainly stamped upon my mind, that it has since seemed like reality instead of a dream. I dreamed that her prophecy was given entire in this remark: '*A fiend of Hades is thy deadly foe, and ere many moons have come and gone, thou wilt meet him face to face; but in the moment of thy triumph, both will be stricken down by the hand of God!*' Those are the words I heard in my dream. I shall never forget them. They were spoken distinctly, and the whole affair was so plain, that I could hardly convince myself, on waking, that it had not really happened. I have no faith in dreams, but somehow I can't help thinking of that one."

He was evidently troubled as he paced backward and forward, with torch in hand, his large but classic features working visibly in the sputtering light, and his breast rising and falling with every surge of the conflict that was raging within.

"Only a dream—only a dream," he kept whispering to himself, as he crossed and recrossed the spacious vault. "Only a dream," and every hollow-sounding step of his heavy boots on the hard floor seemed to echo solemnly: "Only a dream—only a dream."

The singular man paused in his walk, and while he held the flickering torch in his left, he smote his breast with his right hand.

"Once," said he, and his deep voice rung dismally through the cave—"once I was innocent, and would not willingly have harmed an insect. Once I was a happy man, respected and esteemed and particularly fond of society. Now I am a

miserable, wretched, hard-hearted man, leading the life of a hermit in this wild, secluded spot, and knowing that I would feel a fiendish pleasure in seeing that vile ruffian burned at the stake, or torn limb from limb and cast to the four winds. Oh, hell-governed demon! I could tear out his infernal heart and fling it in his face, and turn away without a thought of regret!"

Having worked himself up to such a pitch of excitement that he himself resembled a demon, standing in a vault of the lower regions, he ceased speaking and stood still, looking thoughtfully down at the ground till the war of emotion within began to subside.

"But this is losing time unnecessarily," he presently exclaimed, drawing a long breath at the close of his meditations. "If I would accomplish any thing under cover of night, I must be about it without further delay. I will hurry on to the upper opening now, whence I shall be able to issue forth unobserved."

"Come, cap'in; yer very slow, ye air."

"And you are very precipitate, sir. I am endeavoring to act with discretion, and you should know that 'discretion is the better part of valor.'"

Captain Roger Wayne and Larry O'Lynn had just landed on the island, at a low, sandy point precisely opposite where Alfred Grey deserted his canoe.

These two worthies had concluded to repair to Center Bluff, fully believing that they would there find the fair object of their expedition, and finding, by chance, a dug-out, nothing remained to prevent them from obeying the dictates of their reason.

To Center Bluff, then, they repaired in haste.

Roger Wayne had not lived on the prairies without learning something, all those five years he had been a soldier. Not only was he an expert hunter, a good scout, at home on the trail, and prudent and cunning in time of danger, but was also an adept in the art of paddling an Indian craft without creating the least noise thereby. He, then, took upon himself the responsible task of propelling the dug-out, while Larry's keen eyes scanned the island in constant look-out for suspicious signs.

They had landed on convenient ground, a low, jut ing point, the only one at a desirable distance from the bivouac on the bluff, and the dug-out was drawn up on the sand.

Larry was in a hurry, as they crept stealthily over the stones toward the camp-fire. He had caught a glimpse of a female figure sitting among the savage group, and certain that it was his mistress, he was at once thrown into a spasm of joyful excitement.

"Yez crape along so slow, cap'in," he repeated hurriedly. "Kim along, ye lazy bla'guard, fur kain't yez be afther seein' that the Injuns are preparin' to l'ave the islant?"

Such seemed to be the case, but Captain Wayne was too prudent to move faster than that creeping, stealthy motion with which he was slowly nearing the encampment. He, too, was overjoyed at seeing Adalyn among the dusky band; but he did not allow himself to grow so excited as to forget his usual caution. He also observed, and this with a sinking heart, that the Indians were hurrying to and fro, and being commanded by their white leader, gathering things hastily together and evidently preparing to leave the island!

And he was thinking of this, and was still creeping slowly on across the rugged bluff, when, all on a sudden, a dark form rose up directly in his path! It was an Indian—a big, Herculean Indian, and he seemed to rise out of the ground! He stood like a statue before the two scouts, his arms folded over his massive chest, regarding them with a calm, malicious gaze.

The young ranger took a quick step backward and clapped his hand on the hilt of his sword.

The Indian stirred not.

At that instant the ranger felt himself rudely pushed aside and Larry O'Lynn swept past him.

"Sthand back, cap'in," cried that individual, planting himself in front of our hero. "This **is** my job, it is, an', bedad, it's me what's goin' to do it up foin."

The black-thorn cudgel performed a graceful circle round his head, and then went swishing through the air. A terrible blow was aimed at the head of the hostile interceptor, but with a quick, wiry motion, the cunning dog managed to evade it.

Instantly a loud, prolonged war-whoop rung out from his dusky throat! Captain Wayne shrunk back aghast.

"Och! that's yer game, is ud?" yelled Larry, enraged beyond measure at the Indian's superior cunning, and thereupon the heavy shillalah fell like a club of iron on the head of the red-skin, crushing his skull and dropping him lifeless to the ground.

"Take that, ye dirty spalpeen, an' hereafter ye'll know betther than to sthand before gintlemen."

"Oh, Larry, you are so very careless!" groaned the ranger, with a feeling of despair.

For the signal-whoop of the Galwegian's victim had aroused the camp of his brethren. Cry upon cry filled the air with a hideous din. The camp-fire was scattered in every direction. Eight savages came rushing fearlessly, eagerly toward the scene of the little tragedy that had been enacted so near to them!

Before the two scouts could make good their escape, their retreat was cut off. There was no possible chance of reaching the dug-out without fighting their way to it, and simultaneously they realized that the only alternative left them was to hold their ground and resist, to the best of their ability, the attack of the Pawnees. Eight against two! How hopeless seemed the task of holding their ground against so many, especially as it was a war-party, and all were armed to the teeth with bows, tomahawks, knives and fire-arms. Death or captivity appeared inevitable to them, but they were both sturdy, fearless men, accustomed to danger, and fearing nothing while they had their arms with which to defend themselves; and no sooner did they observe that there was no chance for escape by flight, than they stationed themselves side by side, boldly faced the foe and stood on the defensive.

Fierce, blood-curdling whoops rose from the shadowy shapes that were dancing around them like shadows of ill-omen; leaping about, brandishing their weapons, jabbering and shouting, and gradually drawing nearer and nearer, like hungry beasts approaching dangerous prey.

Crack! crack! Two bullets whistled harmlessly past them and were flattened against a huge rock in the rear.

"Now, Larry," whispered Captain Wayne, in a tone of cool

determination, "select your man, and by all means make sure work of him. I will use my gun, and as you have none, you will take your pistol. Now—ready—fire!"

There were two responsive reports from the weapons of the whites, two loud yells, and two red-skins dropped dead upon the stones. At this the others gave vent to howls of rage, and growing bolder they pressed forward with vindictive houts and fierce resolution.

"Death is preferable to captivity," declared Wayne, and as he spoke his sword leaped from its scabbard, the bright steel glittering in the darkness. Larry followed suit by seizing his heavy bludgeon and whirling it round his head.

Waving these formidable weapons backward and forward in front of them, they succeeded in keeping the infuriated assailants off.

"Down with the pale-face dogs!" shouted the voice of Kyle Bernard, as he appeared at that instant among his followers. "Down with them! Give them no quarter! Crush them to the earth, every mother's son of them!"

"Barrin' the fact that I ain't got no mother at all!" roared Larry, brandishing his club uncomfortably close to the hideously-painted Pawnees, at the same time dancing a sort of Irish jig as though performing for the amusement of the savages.

Two more shots were fired by the attacking party, and one of the balls inflicted a painful flesh-wound in the Irishman's left arm.

This enraged the daring son of Erin. He saw the warrior who had shot him, and with a fearful oath he leaped toward him. One twirl of his favorite black-thorn, one lightning-like stroke, and the brains of the luckless offender flew in every direction, his corpse sinking down at the feet of his brethren.

This act fairly maddened the Indians. They pressed forward with redoubled energy and determination, their fierce, blood-chilling cries almost deafening the whites. The latter fought with the desperation of despair. The cold perspiration began to ooze out upon their foreheads as they continued to wave their tired arms from one side to the other, every stroke of their weapons being successfully parried by their opponents.

Well they knew how vain was their resistance. Well they knew that they must soon succumb to the overpowering force that had pressed them back step by step, until the huge rock in their rear preventing further retreat, told them that the time had come when they must brace their nerves for a last despairing stroke for freedom.

Captain Wayne gave one desperate plunge with his sword. It struck the barrel of a gun, glancing off and encountering a huge boulder with such force as to snap the blade off close to the hilt! Panting like a stag at bay, he flung the useless remnant of the broken sword into the faces of his untiring foes, braced his back against the rock, and felt for a pistol with which to continue the struggle.

But he was too late. Seeing the advantage, Kyle Bernard sprung forward with a triumphant cry, and felled the young hero to the ground with a single blow from the butt of his pistol. Without so much as a moan the ranger sunk to the ground, and lay there in a state of insensibility under the feet of his victorious enemies.

At the same instant Larry O'Lynn's club was knocked from his grasp by a well-directed sweep of a rifle-stock!

In a second, half a dozen knives were raised to take the lives and scalps of the helpless pale-faces.

But just then an incident occurred that caused them to stay their murderous hands. A light flashed in their faces from a point a few feet distant. A tall, ghostly being, with a flaring torch in his hand, was seen coming up out of the ground like an inhabitant of the lower regions paying a nocturnal visit to the upper world.

The Indians were spell-bound to the spot. They stood speechless in their tracks, staring in wild amaze at the startling apparition, the torch of the latter throwing a ghastly light upon them.

The singular phenomenon paused for a moment, and then came striding forward as if about to walk through the group of terrified savages, his white face and flashing eyes plainly visible to their astonished gaze. He paused, raised one hand warningly on high, and cried in deep, unnatural tones:

"Back, incarnate fiends! and you, Conrad Wayne, beware, lest you die at this moment by the hand of your victim!"

The so-called Kyle Bernard was almost stunned.

For several seconds he stood trembling violently before that withering gaze, and then without a word to his men he turned about and bounded away into the darkness.

The panic-stricken Pawnees did not tarry. Breaking the spell that had rooted them to the spot, they whirled round and rushed pellmell after their leader with loud cries of affright, tumbling over each other, and dashing blindly over the stones as though their very souls depended on their fleetness of foot. Then there was a commotion down by the water's edge; a confusion of sounds; shouting, scrambling, splashing and tumbling, as they took to their canoes *en masse*.

"Mither of Moses!" cried the amazed Galwegian, turning toward his rescuer. "Can it be that this is yoursilf, Mither Grey, turnin' up jist in time to save yer fri'nds, an' scarin' thim nagurs out av their wits, an' makin' 'em b'lave yer the divil, sure?"

"It is I truly, Larry," smiled Alfred Grey, "and I find my advent here is very opportune. I have made those rascals believe me a ghost more than once to-night."

"But what made yez l'ave the cabin, master?"

"The cabin is burned to the ground."

"Howly Vargin! ye don't mane it! Who done it? How'd ye git away?"

"Never mind. I will explain all by-and-by. The captain here needs our assistance. He is insensible and must be brought to life if possible. Here, Larry, hold the torch, while I see what can be done for the poor fellow."

A few drops of brandy were forced down the throat of the unconscious captain, and he soon opened his eyes.

"Ah, Mr. Grey, is this you?" he exclaimed, rising to a sitting posture and looking around bewildered. "How can you be here, and what has become of those Indians?"

"They are gone, and will trouble you no more," was the reply.

"And did they take her?" he cried, with wild eagerness.

"Yis," put in Larry; "I heard her scrame whin they was embarkin'."

"But never mind," added Grey; "you can not be as grieved

as I. Get up now, if you can, and I will explain how I came here and how I frightened those Indians away so easily. After that we will set out in pursuit of the scoundrels, and dog their footsteps until we find an opportunity of releasing Adalyn."

CHAPTER VIII.

REVELATION AND RETROSPECTION.

As nothing worthy of note immediately followed the timely reunion of Alfred Grey and the two scouts, we will pass over the remainder of that eventful night and all of the following day.

Also we will avail ourselves of the author's privilege of shifting the scenes, and carrying the story from familiar places to strange ones.

Accompany us westward, kind reader, to a point five miles away. To a wildly picturesque spot five miles distant from the little lake where transpired the events recorded in the foregoing chapters. It is but a short journey toward the setting sun, and we rest at our destination.

'Tis a wild, mountainous region, with towering cliffs, deep ravines and yawning chasms. A beautiful little valley, where wild cactus and flowers of every imaginable hue grew in profusion, and which was inclosed on three sides by high, rocky crags, the fourth side opening out toward the east, exhibiting a broad expanse of level prairie land. A tiny stream rippled through the center of it, flowing from a small, natural basin, that had been formed by the sparkling cascade that came tumbling down from the precipice above, and glided away like a serpent into some dark retreat among the rocks. On the whole, the scene was romantically picturesque.

On the right, nestled there at the base of a high precipice, and almost hidden amid the trees and thick shrubbery that surrounded it, stands a small dwelling. It is a well-constructed hut, containing ample room for a single occupant, and evidently erected with an eye to neatness and safety, and a view

to a lengthy residence in that secluded glen. Birds sat in the windows or on the eaves, and poured forth their warbling lays; squirrels gambled on the greensward and played about the door; beautiful colored flowers round the imbedded stoop rose up and nodded their pretty heads over the threshold; and running vines clambered confusedly up the walls, and over the windows and doors and roof.

This solitary habitation was the abode of a singular being.

He was a man known by few persons, and those few persons only knew that he was a priest, and that his name was Father Villaires. Why he had left his profession, and sought seclusion in the wilds of the Rocky Mountains, none save himself seemed to know. He had no companions, not even as much as a dog or horse, but lived quietly there alone, free from the persecutions of hostile red-men, and with no other company than that which was afforded him by the birds and squirrels, that sung and played about his door, and the pretty flowers that nodded silently to him as he passed.

For years, that hidden habitation had been the home of the eccentric Father Villaires, who subsisted on what food could be obtained with his unerring rifle, and who had resided there all that time, in as utter solitude as a shipwrecked mariner cast on a desert island.

But with the old priest we have nothing at present to do.

The sun had set behind the rugged peaks of the Rocky Mountains, and while the soft shades of twilight brooded over the country, the darkness of night reigned in the valley of the hermit priest. Long banks of murky clouds were lying along the western horizon, illuminated at intervals by gleams of lightning, accompanied by the distant rumbling of thunder. Evidently the night was to be disturbed by an elemental war.

Concealed in a retired nook at no great distance from the priest's hut, sat three men.

As motionless as so many mummies; as silent as the Night that was spreading her shadowy wings over the mountains, they sat beneath a projecting ledge of rock side by side, crouching back as far as they could from the outer world, and conversing only in soft, guarded whispers. A thick growth of friendly bushes, so dense as to be impenetrable, closed in the dark retreat, and served to conceal the weird-looking trio

within, from the scrutinizing glance of any outsider that chanced to pass.

The dense gloom of midnight already prevailed in the snug little nook, and the keenest eye could not have seen from without, that a little group of human beings were concealed therein. But a close scrutiny would have detected the dim, faint outlines of three human figures, sitting erect side by side.

As may have been already conjectured, the hidden individuals mentioned were none others than our three friends, Alfred Grey, his faithful man Larry O'Lynn, and the young captain, Roger Wayne.

They had joined hands in the pursuit of the Indians, and had given themselves up, soul and body, to the task of rescuing the kidnapped maiden. Having lingered on Center Bluff, till the morning sun had cast his golden rays above the eastern horizon, they had set out on their journey in the full light of day. On the western shore of the lake, they had taken up the trail of Kyle Bernard and his band, and followed it persistently over five miles of rolling prairie, to the beautiful little valley where we now find them secreted.

Though the Indians were mounted on good horses, which they had ready for use out on the prairie, and though at some distance out they had been reinforced, increasing their number to a score or more, yet the sturdy whites pushed on as determinedly as when they started. Captain Wayne, who had taken the part of trailer, had discovered by close examination that, after the addition alluded to, the party numbered at least twenty-five, and though this was by no means a pleasant discovery to them, they did not allow it to dampen their courage.

It had also become evident to them, that the war-party was heading toward the Pawnee village. They knew, too, that, mounted as they were, the barbarians would arrive there long before they could be overtaken, and then the difficulties of rescuing the maiden would be increased a hundred fold.

But pushing resolutely on, they had, in a short time, traced the savages to the picturesque mountain-valley, where, for some cause or other, they had come to a halt. There, having quite unexpectedly overtaken the red villains, they hid themselves to wait until after the close of day, when they might plan and perform under cover of the night.

"We are going to have a stormy night, I fear," whispered Alfred Grey, leaning cautiously forward, and peering through the thick-growing bushes up at the darkening sky.

"That should not trouble you, sir," returned the ranger. "Better storm than moonlight. If those red-skins stop here over night, we will prefer darkness in which to carry out our plans, and for my part, I have been noting the coming storm rather with feelings of satisfaction than regret."

"You know better than I," acknowledged the other, resuming his seat. "You have had more experience than I have, and you shall be leader and commander of the party. Do with me as you will, my boy, I trust in you."

Roger felt a thrill of pleasure at this assertion of the captive's father. He inferred from it—and he smiled with a secret satisfaction as he thought of it—that he had broken the icy exterior of this strange man's heart, and worked himself into the good graces of one whom he had thought immovable.

"Perhaps he will yet accept me for a son-in-law without reluctance," he meditated. Then aloud: "Thank you, sir, for your confidence in one who so little deserves it as I, and rest assured, that every thing that is within my power to do for the recovery of your daughter shall be done. They are all at the old priest's cabin now, as you know, and it is evident that they intend remaining there until morning. Why they have stopped there I can not guess, unless they have taken a fancy to the hoary scalp of the poor old man, and have halted to secure it and plunder the house; but, be that as it may, the circumstance is favorable to us. Most of the Indians will doubtless sleep out of doors, under shelter of the trees and the cliff, while Kyle Bernard will, beyond a doubt, compel Miss Adalyn to occupy the house, where she will be strictly guarded. After all, we have a very difficult task before us, and we undertake it at the peril of our lives; but her life is at stake, and we will save it or forfeit our own in the effort!"

"Ay, that we will," echoed the hunter, with a burst of feeling. "And that white fiend, with a blood-bedaubed face, shall soon know the weight of my vengeance. But this hermit—this priest; does he live entirely alone here in this uninhabited place?"

"Entirely alone, sir ; and has for at least three years."

"You were aware of his existence, then, before to-day?"

"I was. You probably remember that last summer, I and my rangers pursued a war-party of Sioux up in this direction, overtaking and capturing them in the vicinity of Chimney Rock, as they were making tracks for the South Pass. You do? Well, it was then I first heard of and saw the eccentric Father Villaires. Why he has taken up his abode here, so far away from any other human habitation, is unknown. Probably the only cause is a natural love of solitude."

"If we could only be certain of his friendship for the whites, he might be of some service to us," suggested the recluse. I believe he is a good man, and all that he seems to be, and if I am right, of course he will never be unwilling to lend his assistance, in effecting the triumph of virtue over vice.

"Hark! hear how rapidly sound the distant thunder-claps," murmured Alfred Grey, after a pause.

"It will be a fearful storm," added Wayne.

"But we must not shrink from it, captain."

"Never, sir, never!" responded the fearless youth. "While I am able to keep upon my feet, I will defy the wind, and as for the rain, it is not worthy of thought."

"Well said, my boy, and I give you my hand upon it. My dear, dear daughter! I would give my right hand to see thee once more free, and under my protection. But listen!" he added, his voice gliding abruptly into a strange, unnatural whisper. "The wind is rising now, and the lightning flashes almost incessantly across the western sky, and—and—ah! how awfully foreboding sounds the far-off rumbling of the thunder. It sends a strange shiver through my frame, and makes me feel—I hardly know how!"

This singular speech, as well as the singular tone in which it was delivered, somewhat astonished Captain Wayne, and caused him to look curiously at the speaker. But as the man had relapsed into a calm silence, he concluded that his imagination was at work, and softly replied:

"True, the thunder does sound threatening, as though it were coming to thwart our purpose, but we will not permit it to do so unless it strikes us dead."

"Dead—dead!" slowly repeated Alfred Grey, and a cold tremor crept through his Herculean frame.

Though half convinced that his companion was troubled with a presentiment, the officer deemed it best to notice nothing unusual, and after a brief lull in the conversation, he said:

"Well, well, Mr. Grey, the night is upon us, and it is time we were beginning to think of some preliminary movement. By the way, Larry, how is your arm, where that dog wounded you on Center Bluff? Is it so sore that you will be unable to do your usual amount of fighting, if fighting becomes necessary?"

The faithful servitor was apparently ignorant of the interrogatory remarks addressed to him. Leastwise, instead of vouchsafing an answer, he maintained a strict silence.

"Do you hear, old fellow?" said the young man, speaking a little louder, and turning toward the wounded man.

Still no answer from the Irishman. Nothing could be heard save his low, regular breathing.

"He's asleep!" chuckled Wayne.

Poor Larry, weary and drowsy as he was, after a night of vigilance and active watchfulness, wearisome tramping and hard fighting, and a day of travel and wakefulness, had in reality yielded to nature and fallen asleep, amid the dangers that encompassed them. He was leaning back in a comfortable position, his hands hanging idly by his side, his head bowed upon his breast, and the measured breathing gradually deepening into a prolonged, rumbling snore.

"Poor fellow," murmured the soldier. "He is resting now, and enjoying a temporary forgetfulness of his troubles."

"We had better wake him, nevertheless," said the elder man. "It is entirely out of the question for any of us to sleep to-night."

Roger turned toward the sleeper again, and laid a hand on his shoulder, pushing him gently:

"Larry! Larry!" he whispered, shaking him lightly. "Don't you know that this is no time to sleep?"

No response from the unconscious man.

"Up, Larry, up!" shaking him more violently than before.

This partially aroused the snorer. He grunted, groaned, and stretched one arm out, mumbling:

"G'long wid yez, ye spalpeen. Gi' over there in yer own place, an' go t' sleep. 'Tain't marnin' yit, at all, at all!"

"'Sh! not so loud—not so loud," cautioned the other.

"Sthop yer blarney, ye blow-pipe, or I'll tap yer snoot wid me sthick, I will. Is it the likes iv yez that 'ud be afther—"

"Larry, Larry—as you value your life, don't talk so loudly," interposed the alarmed ranger.

"G'way, Tim Boorum! Make the fire yersilf."

Another rough shake, and Larry was aroused from his sound nap. Sitting bolt upright, he began to rub his eyes.

"Is that you, Misther Grey?" he growled, trying to look through the gloom. "Ye purty near knocked me out iv bed."

And it was some time before the bewildered man could realize his position, and the circumstances that had brought it about. When he did, and had fully awakened to the fact, that he was there in the valley of the old priest with Roger Wayne and his master; that he had involuntarily fallen asleep while watching there with his friends, he said:

"Be the seven candles, I b'pave I've been aslape."

"I am inclined to think so myself," smiled the captain; "and a sounder nap you certainly never enjoyed."

"Nor a shorter," growled Larry, discontentedly.

"We were obliged to wake you, because it is necessary to be on the alert. By the way, how is your arm?"

"Still purty sore, yer honor, but riddy fur use, jist, as soon as the nagurs commence hostilities on Moll Kelley's gallant lovyer."

"Good. I am going to leave you for awhile now, comrades, as the night has progressed sufficiently to warrant a movement. I will probably return in a few minutes."

"You had better not go," objected Alfred Grey.

"I think differently, my friend, and I will tell you why. We must not allow this night to pass, without having done something in the way of assisting Miss Adalyn out of her difficulty, and it is best to begin by reconnoitering. As one person can do more than two in a reconnoissance, I have thought it more feasible to go alone."

"You will return directly?"

"In all probability I will. If, perchance, I fail to make

my appearance within an hour from this time, do not take it for granted that I have fallen into the hands of the enemy but that I have conceived a practicable plan, and am working it out."

"Captain Wayne, good-by." Alfred Grey seized the young man's hand with a nervous grasp, and pressed it with fingers as cold as ice. "If we never meet again in this world—"

"Pshaw! pshaw! why do you talk thus, Mr. Grey? I shall return to you alive and unharmed."

"That may be, captain—that may be," said the man, in faint, hollow tones and slow, measured accents. "But on your return you may not find me in the same condition."

Our hero gave a little start of apprehension.

"Explain yourself, my friend," he managed to articulate. "Your words, your voice, the coldness of your hands, and your evident agitation, are to me so many inexplicable mysteries."

"Listen, Roger Wayne. Have you a father living?"

"A strange question, truly, Mr. Grey. No, my father is not living, nor is my mother. He died when I was but a child, and she a few years since, leaving me an almost penniless orphan."

"Are you certain, my boy, that your father is dead?"

Roger hesitated, and a blush of shame mantled his handsome, manly face. He bent forward, and peered into the face of his interrogator, as though he would learn something there, and then, resuming his erect attitude, he rejoined:

"Candidly, sir, I am not certain of what I have said: I am not exactly certain that he is not alive to-night, and, placing implicit confidence in you, I will tell you truthfully what I know of him. The fact is, he was not a good man. My mother was the embodiment of purity and goodness, but he, in the contrast, was wicked and unfeeling. He won her pure, confiding heart only to break it, and when she told me this, as she lay on her death-bed, I resolved that if the hardened wretch was still living, I would yet confront him and rebuke him, for the wreck he had made of my poor, patient, loving mother. Why, sir," and the speaker's voice shook with emotion, "he cruelly deserted her a short time subse-

gent to my birth, leaving a cold, brutish message which nearly killed her. The message amounted to a mocking farewell, and the cool, heartless assertion, that he was sick of their marriage and would never return.

"But that was not all. He did not leave the neighborhood alone, but eloped with another woman--the wife of a respectable citizen of New Orleans, where we at that time resided. This unfortunate woman he won from the path of duty with his handsome features, his pleasing address, and deceptive speeches, and I doubt not that long ere this he has blasted her earthly happiness. Neither mother nor I ever saw or heard of him after his desertion of us. I know not whether he is dead or alive, but if the latter, I pray that I may meet him face to face before he is called upon to answer for his terrible sin. And that, my friend, is a brief relation of all I know concerning my father."

Alfred Grey was breathing hard now, as memories of the past filled his excited brain.

"You at that time lived in Royal street, New Orleans," he said, rather affirmatively than interrogatively.

"We did," said the youth, astonished. "But who are you, that seem to have formerly known our family? Who are you, that can tell so accurately our place of residence, at the time of that sad event?"

"Your father's name was Conrad Wayne," continued Alfred Grey, without heeding these wild inquiries.

"It was," answered the officer, in a bewildered sort of way, with an expression akin to awe settling on his features. "But tell me, sir, what do you know of him?"

"I know that he is a villain," was the bitter response. "And I know, too, my boy, that he *lives*!"

"*Lives*!" cried Wayne, excitedly. "*Lives*! Tell me, man, are you speaking now from actual knowledge?"

"I never assert any thing otherwise," was the less excited rejoinder. "At this hour your father is alive and well."

"Where is he, then?—where is he? Can you tell me that?"

"I can," firmly responded the other. "If I mistake not, he is in this very valley, or I am positive that he is not a hundred miles from it."

"You jest! you jest!"

"I never jest," was the frowning reply.

"Then—then—" and Captain Wayne grasped the hunter's arm—"then you mean that—that— Speak, my friend, and tell me if he has covered his own name with a spurious one?"

"He has. In his character of Indian chief, assassin and cut throat, he roams these prairies under the assumed appellation of *Kyle Bernard*, dealing death to his own race—a white warrior with the heart of a tiger."

Roger recoiled with a low groan.

"My God! am I *his* son?" he cried, in a shame-stricken voice. "Am I the son of Kyle Bernard? Can it be that *his* foul blood flows in my veins? I have heard of that man and his exploits for years, but never suspected the truth. How know you that this is true?"

"Sufficient that I know it. Conrad Wayne has done me an irreparable wrong. Ask me no questions now, and in all likelihood you will one day know all."

"And you have known this a long time," asked Roger, "and have disliked me as the offspring of one who did you an injury?"

"I confess that I did loathe you at first, and it was hard to listen to your proposition to recover my child within three days on condition that you might claim her hand for a reward. I hated the name then, but now I have softened a little toward you, since I find you are so very different from your father."

Captain Wayne became silent and thoughtful. He had never suspected that his father, wicked as he was, could become such a savage, bloodthirsty monster as the pretended Kyle Bernard was known to be, and even now, he could not fully believe that that flagitious wretch was the man whom he had once loved as a parent.

But he said no more on the subject. At length, taking up his gun, he said, quite calmly:

"I will go now, Mr. Grey. If I do not return within an hour, have no fears for me. Remember what I say: I shall not get into trouble, whatever I do."

"But stop, captain, stop," said the hunter. "Give me your

land before you go. Let me wring your hand once more before we part, for I feel that something is going to happen—that—that—”

“Pshaw, Mr. Grey, cheer up. Don't let such a feeling as this cast you down. Perhaps it is a presentiment. Then you should laugh at it, and say you don't believe in such things, and try to think all will come right. Good-by, comrades, and trust in me.”

With this the noble fellow passed out of the sheltered nook through the bushes that screened it, and was lost to view.

CHAPTER IX.

WATCHING AT THE WINDOW.

AFTER the departure of the young man, Alfred Grey reclined on the soft carpet of fresh green grass, entirely inadvertent of the numerous remarks and inquiries of Larry, who endeavored to draw him into conversation. He thought of the past and present, and, with a shudder, of the future. He thought of his deadly enemy, the White Warrior, Kyle Bernard, and of his noble son, Roger, and of the startling revelation he had made to the latter of the relationship that existed between him and the white chief. But these things did not long dwell in his perturbed mind. Invariably, when he attempted to center his thoughts upon something of a more pleasant nature, they would wander back to that terrible dream, which had been troubling him for the last few days.

“It was so vivid,” he murmured, “so very vivid,” and every gleam of lightning, every crash of thunder, every shriek of the rising wind seemed only to remind him of that mysterious prophecy which was spoken to him in his dream:

“*A fiend of Hades is thy deadly foe, and ere many moons have come and gone, thou shalt meet him face to face; but in the moment of thy triumph, both will be stricken down by the hand of God!*”

“But it was a dream, and only a dream,” he tried to say.

sure himself, making, at the same time, an unavailing effort to summon a contemptuous smile to his lips.

At the same time that Alfred Grey was thinking of the renegade, his captive daughter and that memorable dream, young Captain Wayne was out in the night alone, thinking of Bernard, and his youthful face was flushed with shame and indignation, as he wondered if it could be true that that terrible man was his father.

And as he thus ruminated, he was at the same time moving slowly, cautiously, stealthily across the valley, toward the pretty, vine-covered hut of the priest, that stood amid the evergreen trees at the base of the cliff. He advanced in a stooping attitude, using all the skill and precaution at his command, holding up his heavily-charged rifle with both hands, ready for use, and the occasional flashes from the western sky at intervals lit up his calm, determined face. The butts of a brace of pistols protruded from the breast of his blue military coat, and a long knife hung at his waist, loosened in its sheath, ready to be drawn forth at any instant, while the vigilant eyes scanned the bushes and underbrush for something that would call the formidable weapons into service.

Experienced scout as he was, our hero greatly feared that he would not be able to reach a point near enough to the house to learn any thing satisfactorily. What he most wished to know was how and where Adalyn would be situated during the night, and to gain this knowledge he must circumvent a score or more of crafty Indians in order to reach a position where he could obtain an unobstructed view of the interior of the hut. To accomplish this, he must necessarily exercise great skill and cunning, but he resolved to risk the attempt in spite of the obstacles and perils he must unavoidably encounter. And on he went, with firm resolution and stealthy, cat-like tread, his heart throbbing with the hope of rescuing the maiden and restoring her to the arms of her grieved father, receiving, in return, the reward he had promised him.

As he glided round the corner of a massive rock, a light suddenly flashed in his eyes. He had come upon the hut rather unexpectedly. The hidden home of the eccentric Father Villaires was within a few yards of the spot where he stood. The hut was brilliantly illuminated. Lights gleamed

From the windows, streaming out upon the greensward in front, revealing the delicate tints of the modest flowers that bloomed amid the grass, and glimmering through the trees and thick-growing shrubbery that effectually concealed the little home. Voices, too, could be heard within, Indian gibberish mingled with plain English articulations, and the profusion of wax-candles filled the house and surroundings with such a flood of dazzling brilliance as to make the scene resemble preparations for a feast or a wedding.

But this was not all that fell under the observation of the beholder. On the north side of the hut, out under the wide-spreading branches of the trees, close up under the friendly cliff that was to shelter it from the coming storm, was an encampment.

A fire was crackling merrily there at the base of the precipice, the smoke and sparks soaring up through the foliage of the evergreens, and the reddish glare of the dancing flames casting grotesque shadows over the grassy sward and among the rocks. Gathered around this fire, sitting or reclining in various attitudes, was a party of painted Indians, twenty in number, which was undoubtedly the main portion of the band that had been followed thither by the three scouts. Some smoking, some eating, some broiling meat, and all talking, they formed a complete circle round the fire, their grim, painted faces revealed in all their hideousness to the pale-face watcher. To all appearance they had made preparations to remain there until morning.

Captain Wayne's plans were formed in a moment. The course he should take was immediately made clear to him. Before him was the hut. Within it, beyond a doubt, was the fair captive, her brutal captor, and probably two or three savages, while outside, a short distance from the house, was the bivouac of the Pawnee war-party. In order to escape the detection of the watchful war-party, and yet accomplish his purpose, he would make a *détour* round the glade, and approach the cabin on that side directly opposite the one chosen by the Pawnees for their camp. This course struck him as the only one left for him to pursue, and no sooner had the plan entered his head than he began to carry it into execution.

Keeping a close watch on the brilliantly-lighted cabin and the encampment, he moved slowly back into the gloomy shadows, and then began to make a wide *détour* round the premises. With that same noiseless tread and never-ceasing caution which he had previously exercised, and which seemed to come naturally to him under such circumstances, he glided on in a circuitous route, and soon reached a point where he was completely hidden from the searching glances of the red skins.

With the building between him and the bivouac he breathed more freely, but he paused not here.

His next object was to reach the dwelling. On the side now facing him were two windows, both of them wide open to admit the air, and one of these he slyly approached, well pleased with his success thus far, as the hope he had hitherto felt began slowly to give way to confidence that he would accomplish that which he had undertaken. Steadily, step by step, he advanced; softly, with the barrel of his gun, he parted the bushes that rose up in his way, and at length, arriving at a spot where he could see the different persons that occupied the house, he came to a halt.

Standing under the sheltering branches of a large oak tree, he leaned eagerly forward and looked in through the window.

The room was aglow with wax candles, rendering every object it contained distinctly visible from the position our hero occupied. On the opposite side of the apartment, sitting in a rustic chair, was Father Villaires. He was an old man, with hair and beard as white as the driven snow, the former sweeping the back of the chair in which he sat, and the latter reaching to his waist. His features were large but regular withal; his lips at repose, and they were seldom otherwise denoted firmness and courage, while his massive brow, his calm, deep-set eyes, and the shape of his grand old head were strongly indicative of knowledge and wisdom. This was Father Villaires, the venerable priest and lone hermit of the Rocky Mountains.

Near him, sitting on a rude bench, were two individuals on whom the scrutinizing gaze of the ranger next rested—two individuals as much unlike each other as the vulture is un

like the dove. These were Kyle Bernard, the savage, and Adalyn Grey, the "Lily of the Lake." They were sitting side by side, she with her lovely form drooping like a broken lily, her head resting upon one white, delicate hand, and her black, flowing hair concealing the beautiful face with which she was blessed, all unconscious of the tender, pitying gaze that was bent upon her from the open window; he with one arm resting on the back of the bench behind her, and his stately head inclined almost to a level with her ear as he talked to her in low, earnest tones.

"Inhuman wretch!" muttered the scout, with flashing eyes. "I wonder what he is saying now to the poor girl. How remorselessly he persecutes her, and how relentlessly he appears to be urging her to some course repugnant to her womanhood. It is quite likely that he is compelling her to hear some hellish proposal, from which her spotless character shrinks revolted. Great God! I hope he is not my father. I wish he would lift his head."

Besides the white persons mentioned there were five fierce-looking Indians in the room, all big, stalwart fellows, and all armed to the teeth. They were walking leisurely about, talking among themselves as they trod the solid floor with proud, majestic mien, the little bells and other trinkets that adorned their gaudy garments tinkling at every step. These, in all probability, were to stop within-doors all night, to guard the prisoner, and the young captain perceived how hazardous—in fact, how hopeless—would be any attempt to steal their captive should she really be so strongly guarded.

Having carefully noted every person visible, and drawn conclusions that were by no means pleasing, from the scene within, he was about to draw back to a safer stand, when a movement inside caused him to keep his position. Kyle Bernard suddenly turned away from the poor girl and sprung to his feet with an angry oath.

"By all the imps in Pandemonium, I will not be trifled with in this manner!" he cried, stamping his feet with rage, and causing the Indians to stare at him in amazement and awe. "Girl!" he shouted, turning toward the maiden, "do you think to have things all your own way? You listen to my words only with loathing and haughty indignation, and

now, by the heaven above, your pride shall have a fall, and you shall be humbled to the dust. Do you hear me? Do you understand, or shall I speak in plainer terms? This night—nay, this very hour!—you shall—”

“Oh, God, have mercy!” wailed the terrified captive, tottering to her feet and raising her tearful eyes heavenward. “Father in heaven, have mercy! Pity me—oh, pity me!”

Bernard gave utterance to a hoarse, mocking laugh.

“Ha! ha! ha! why do you seek his protection? Do you think he will aid you?—*you*, the vile scum of a coward’s blood? Ha! ha! ha!”

“Oh, crime-hardened wretch!” murmured our hero, fairly trembling with rage, and nervously fingering the lock of his gun; “would that I might shoot you down in your tracks without incurring danger to myself and friends. Ah! she has fainted.”

Poor Adalyn! she had really succumbed at last.

With that last fearful threat of her merciless persecutor chilling her very soul, she had sunk back upon the bench and fainted dead away, her face resembling death in its marble-like pallor. Bernard folded his arms and for a moment stood gazing down upon the insensible creature with an exultant smile.

“Some water, quick!” cried the old priest. “Don’t you see that she has fainted? Water, or she may die!”

“I will bring some water, old man, if you will give me a vessel,” said the villain, carelessly.

“Here, then—and hasten, lest you be too late,” and the hermit placed a brown gourd cup in his hand.

Without even glancing again at that pale, silent creature, the innocent victim of his brutality, he walked toward the door. Before he reached it, however, he turned round, and stood facing the old man. He raised his hand and said:

“Father Villaires, you may get your Bible while I am absent, and prepare to join that girl and me in the holy bonds of matrimony. Hear me, now, and mark my words. As soon as she recovers from this fainting-fit, she is to become my wife, and you shall be the instrument that is to make her my wife. Therefore, get thee ready at once and prepare to perform the ceremony. Refuse at your peril.”

Father Villaires made no reply to this arrogant command, but there was a world of compassion in the look he bestowed upon the young girl. Captain Wayne ground his teeth and glared like a caged tiger at the renegade. He had already scrutinized every feature of the ruffian's face, and had soon satisfied himself that Alfred Grey's statement was correct concerning the relationship that existed between them, for certainly that mouth, nose and hair were the very counterpart of those he had often seen in the looking-glass that hung in his quarters at the fort. He was really astonished at being compelled to acknowledge to himself that this man was his father, but he was doubly astonished when he heard him boldly proclaim that Adalyn should become his wife. Wife! and he a man old enough to be her father, and a villain of the blackest dye!

"Infamous profligate!" he hissed, "an avenging God is certainly reserving a terrible punishment for you. But, by heaven, you shall this time be thwarted in your ignominious design. You shall never force that innocent girl into wedlock with you!"

Kyle Bernard, after delivering his parting injunction to the priest, immediately passed out of the house and closed the door behind him. In a moment the officer had made up his mind what he should do next. He knew the renegade had gone after some water with which to restore Adalyn to life, and he guessed he would procure it at the silver cascade that fell over the precipice into the valley a short distance away. He would follow the man—dog his footsteps—keep a watch upon him until he arrived at the cascade—confront him there—and then—

With a brightening countenance, and with renewed hope and determination, Roger stole away from the window and glided quickly around the corner of the house in pursuit of the man whom he had found to be his father.

He was already out of sight.

"I will catch him," whispered the youth.

And he slipped across the door-step—on across the open space in plain view of the savages who were encamped on the green area. He thought not of them. His mind was wholly engrossed on the one great object which he had resolved to

gain or die, and he passed before the very eyes of the Indians, and as luck would have it was unobserved. Seeming to slide rather than walk, he moved hastily over the ground and the obstacles that came in his way—hastily, quickly, but as silently as a shadow—on, in the direction of the tiny stream that tumbled over the cliff, where he thought to overhaul and detain the flagitious desperado. The lightning grew brighter, the thunder louder, and the wind fiercer in its mad rush, but he paid no heed to the commotion of the elements—noticed nothing save the direction he was taking to reach the cascade.

He soon reached it, it being but a little distance from the hermit's dwelling. He emerged into the open glade where the stream of water came falling down from the rocks above into its natural basin below, and as he did so he halted abruptly, and drew back a little. He was within a few paces of Bernard. He saw the tall form of the outlaw directly in front of him, taking long, rapid strides toward the miniature cataract.

No sooner had he thus suddenly come upon the unsuspecting cut-throat than he paused and glared at him savagely, his eyes flashing fire, his nostrils dilated, and his breath coming and going with a hissing noise through his hard-set teeth.

"He deserves it, the dastardly scoundrel! he deserves it," he said to himself, as though he were hesitating about undertaking some unpleasant task. "Yes, he richly deserves it, and if I am permitted to live two minutes longer he shall have it. Shall I confront him? No, that would be an unnecessary waste of time, and time just now is too precious to lose, since Adalyn was left in such a critical condition. No, I will not let him know that I am his son. Poor Adalyn! she will have to wait a long time for the water, but a just Heaven will not let her die. Now I must act. I must not discharge my gun, for the deed must be done as quickly as possible."

As he finished his soliloquy he nerved himself to perform the terrible deed which he felt that he was in duty bound to perform. He held not a spark of affection for his depraved father, but he would not have harmed a hair of his head, even in remembrance of his deeply-wronged mother, were it not essential to the safety of one who was dearer to him than life itself.

He lost no time. He did not hesitate to revolve the matter in his mind, for he had already decided and resolved. Clutching the barrel of his gun with both hands, he sprung across the glade just as Kyle Bernard was in the act of stooping to fill the gourd cup with water from the basin.

Like lightning the clubbed rifle described a circle in the air, and the next second it came down with crushing force upon the unprotected head of the vile miscreant. Without a cry—without a groan—without even so much as a murmur, the wicked man sunk to the ground and lay as silent as death at the feet of his slayer.

“A cowardly act,” mused Captain Wayne, sadly, as he stood over his fallen father, “a cowardly act, but Heaven knows my object is good. I must not tarry, however. My next and most difficult task is to circumvent those Indians at the hut.”

CHAPTER X.

THE RANGER'S RUSE.

HALF an hour later, and as the tempest came upon the Rocky Mountains in all its fury, a tall, dignified looking man, clad in the gaudy habiliments of an Indian chief, was walking rapidly across the valley in the direction of the old priest's abode.

He was making his way through the dense growth of trees and bushes steadily and hurriedly, as though he were bent upon reaching the hut in the shortest possible time. He was not a red-man, but a pale-face in Indian dress. His face was painted with several different colors; his body was protected by a fancifully-embroidered hunting-shirt, belted tightly at the waist; his head was adorned with a single waving plume; and in his right hand he carried a small, brown gourd cup, filled with water.

We look at him as the dazzling lightning-flashes reveal him to us, and we think we recognize the outlaw, Kyle Bernard, who, half an hour ago, went after water with which to resus-

citate the fainting Adalyn. We think we recognize the manly figure, the proud bearing, the graceful, dignified walk, and even the contour and expression of his dark visage, as those of the Indianized white man who had announced himself as the future husband of the captive maiden, and the vessel he carries so carefully as he walks only goes to prove that it is in reality the white chief.

"Poor girl; poor girl," he says to himself, in a low, pitying tone. "I hope the long delay has not proved fatal to her. If ; has I can never forgive myself. But I must hurry, lest this paint be washed off," he continues, quickening his pace as the large rain-drops begin to patter on the leaves.

He walked boldly across the area where the score of warriors were gathered round their camp-fire, taking no notice of them, and they merely glancing unsuspiciously at him as he passed. There was no occasion for either suspicion or surprise on their part, for surely it was nothing remarkable for their leader to return, since they had seen him leave the house some time before.

Moving briskly, and unhesitatingly up to the front door of the structure, he pushed it rudely open and stepped over the threshold.

As the brilliant flood of light from the numerous candles fell upon him, he dropped his head a trifle and frowned, turning at the same time to close the door behind him. Then gathering courage, he boldly faced the occupants of the room. The five Indians were still walking slowly about the apartment, keeping a keen watch not only upon the maiden but also upon the priest; walking leisurely around, and quietly conversing in their own dialect. Father Villaires, who was sitting in his rustic chair, glanced wonderingly up at the chief as he entered, as though surprised at his long absence.

Adalyn was no longer insensible, but was perfectly conscious, and sitting on the bench again, just as she was when Captain Wayne first looked through the window at her.

"Hallo, she's come to life, has she," carelessly drawled the new-comer, as he looked at her.

"Come to life," said Father Villaires, reproachfully. "If you have comon sense, sirrah, you must have expected to find her either resuscitated or dead after such a protracted absence."

Offering no reply to this rebuke, save a scornful curl of the lip, the man lifted the gourd cup to his mouth and drank its contents at a single gulp. Then casting the empty vessel upon the floor, turned toward the priest.

"I say, old man," he growled, in a surly, disrespectful tone of voice, "haven't you made any movement yet toward getting ready to perform the marriage ceremony? Haven't you got the book out ready to go through with the forms of a decent wedding?"

"I have not," was the calm, fearless reply, and the clear blue eyes of the aged man returned unwaveringly the fierce, menacing gaze of those black, piercing ones.

The apparent renegade frowned darkly.

"See here, old man," he exclaimed, loudly, his voice quivering with ostensible rage, "you are becoming altogether too independent. I will teach you to disobey my orders, sir, when your services are so necessary. Just step aside here a moment, will you, where I can speak to you? I have something to say to you privately."

There was an expression of something like contempt, mingled with defiance, resting upon the firm, majestic mouth of the priest, but as the latter words of his interlocutor much more resembled a request than a mandate, he complied without questioning, more especially for the reason that he knew Kyle Bernard was not a man to tolerate much obstinacy on the part of one who was in his power. Consequently, though by no means afraid of his interlocutor, he meekly allowed himself to be led aside into one corner of the room, where he was to be spoken privately to by the chief.

Once apart from the other occupants of the hut, the last-named individual stepped before the priest and began to talk to him in low, earnest tones.

At first the aged hermit, as he listened, looked puzzled and gazed curiously into the black orbs of the speaker, as though scarcely able to comprehend his meaning. Then the expression changed, and he appeared to be deeply interested and greatly astonished at what was being imparted to him by the man whose words he had treated with contempt but a minute before. Again the expression changed; a holy smile illuminated his massive, open countenance, and the deep-set organs

beneath those white, bushy brows were turned upon the captive maiden with a glad, tender look, while the five stalwart Indians continued their aimless walk, observing every thing but suspecting nothing, save that their crafty leader was bribing the old man of the valley.

The interview was a very brief one. The ostensible Bernard soon turned away from Father Villaires, still frowning darkly.

"Produce the volume then," he said, gruffly, "and let this affair proceed without delay."

With this he went and sat down on the bench beside Adalyn. She was sitting silently there with her face buried in her hands, and she moved not, nor looked up, but only shuddered as he came and seated himself beside her. She was weeping now—weeping quietly and gently, and it was the first time she had wept since she was so ruthlessly torn from her home and father. The large, glistening tears forced their way between her pretty taper fingers and dropped one by one upon the floor, and ever and anon her delicate frame was convulsed with a sigh she could not repress.

Until that terrible declaration was uttered by her merciless captor, that she was to be his wife, she had borne her sad misfortune as only such as she could have borne it, but that last terrible blow was too much for her already bleeding heart.

And now as she bowed down under the crushing blow, and shed bitter, scalding tears as she thought of the contrast between her pleasant home by the lake-side and the lot that was soon to be hers, he who had taken his place by her side—he who was soon to lead her before the old priest and make her his bride—he actually seemed moved by those tears!

He, too, seemed grieved; he, too, looked as though he were struggling with his emotions as he set his lips firmly together, and a close observer might have seen a tear glistening in his eye, and noted the change in his dark face. That hard expression faded away and one of tenderness and pity took its place, and he looked down sadly and wistfully on the sorrowing little creature at his side, as though he wished to share her trouble! Could it be that the villainous desperado, who, up to this moment, had appeared so cold, so

merciless and immovable—who had so unmercifully and unceasingly taunted and tormented his beautiful captive, and who had jeered her even as she fainted—could it be that he was moved to pity as he saw her wrestling with her great sorrow?

Presently he inclined his proud head, bending it down until the tall plume mingled with the raven tresses that enveloped the head of the captive in a cloud of beauty. With his mouth close to her ear he softly spoke the single word:

“Adalyn.”

She started at the sound of that gentle, pleading voice, so much unlike that of her gruff captor, and in her sudden surprise she lifted her dark, tearful eyes to his.

“Who are—are you, sir?” she faltered, at first sight thinking it was really Kyle Bernard, but changing her mind on a second look, as something in that dark countenance chained her attention.

“You know, then, that I am not Bernard?” he said, smiling.

She made no reply. For a moment she continued to look at him, puzzled and breathless, and then, with something like a gleam of recognition in the beautiful orbs that were studying him so closely, she clasped her small white hands and stammered:

“Sir, you—you are not—” and she paused again, and sat looking at the stranger in silent amazement.

“‘Sh!” cautioned the man, glancing at the savages. “Please don’t speak so loudly, fair lady, lest you betray a friend. You recognize in me Roger Wayne, do you not?”

“I do—I do. You are Captain Wayne, of the mounted rangers. But tell me, sir—tell me how this happened? It seems so much like a dream, and you—oh! have you come to save me?”

“There, please be cautious,” implored the young man. “Speak softly, and do not look at me thus, else all will be lost. Listen calmly, and I will explain how this came about. I am really Captain Roger Wayne, as you know, and I am here in disguise for the purpose of assisting you out of the misfortune into which you have fallen.”

“But my father—where is he?”

“He and Larry are at no great distance away, and they are

both alive and safe. We followed your captors to this glen. I came here to reconnoiter under cover of darkness. I saw Kyle Bernard leave the house about half an hour since. I followed him; I slew him; I disguised myself in his garments and painted myself accordingly; I came hither to save you, and I will save you, Miss Adalyn, or perish in the attempt, now that I have proceeded thus far."

"Oh, can this be reality?" she cried, with a half-incredulous look. "Can it be that kind friends are about to rescue me from these bloodthirsty men? Oh, this is too good to be true?"

"No, no, fair one," rejoined our hero; "nothing can be too good for such as you, who are the embodiment of purity and loveliness. But I beg your pardon," he quickly added, abashed at his own boldness.

And she blushed painfully, asking:

"Does father know you are here sir?"

"I suppose he does," was the reply, "though he is not aware that I am endeavoring to effect your release."

"And you, sir, at the risk of your own life, have taken the dangerous task upon yourself, and have boldly walked into the very midst of your murderous foes to help one who can scarcely be any thing to you. How can I ever repay you? You are very good, sir, and God will certainly reward this disinterested effort to do me a kindness."

It is not wonderful that the young captain felt a thrill of pleasure at hearing these words of praise from those sweet lips!

"Don't mention it," said he, gallantly. "Had you known me better, I think I may say you would hardly have been surprised at my willingness to lay down my life in your cause."

"Would you do that, captain?" she asked, naively.

"Would I not? If I succeed in taking you from these Indians, they must walk over the corpse of Roger Wayne to recapture you."

"But that would be more than duty requires."

"Would it?" he asked, with a smile.

"Does duty require a man to lay down his life for a fellow-being?" she asked, with a responsive smile breaking out over

her sad, sweet face, like a ray of sunshine struggling through a cloud.

"Perhaps not," he replied, softly, "but I must confess that it is not duty alone which makes me feel as though I could die for you."

"Isn't it?" and she looked up at him inquiringly. "Why, then, if I may ask, do you appear to feel such an interest in me?"

"Would you have me tell you that?"

"Would I? To be sure," she answered, curiously.

Captain Wayne hesitated, but it was only for an instant. Then, grasping one soft, white hand in both of his, he again drooped his stately head until the single waving plume that adorned it touched the fine, flowing ringlets that adorned hers.

"Because," he answered, impetuously, his soul fired with the encouragement she had given him to speak—"because, dear Adalyn, I love you; because I would have you return that love!"

It was said. Adalyn started a little, and then, as she fully comprehended all, the rich blood mounted to her cheeks, temples and neck in a burning blush. Her eyelids drooped, the long, silken lashes concealing the answer that might have been so easily read in the liquid depths of those velvet-black eyes, and the faintest ghost of a smile played about her ripe, red lips.

"Have I offended you, Miss Grey?" inquired the captain, humbly, half-regretting what he had done.

Now she looked at him; now she turned those beaming, tell-tale eyes upon him, and placing her trembling little hands in his, she said, with quivering lips:

"No, Mr. Wayne; but oh, you have made me so happy!"

And she laid her pretty head upon his shoulder. Catching her in his arms with an exclamation of joy, he pressed a hot, lingering kiss upon her lips, while one of the Indians, who happened to be looking in that direction, smiled, and probably thought the white chief was progressing finely.

"Don't, Mr. Wayne—please don't," she cried, freeing herself from his ardent embrace, and then, scarcely knowing

why, she dropped her head upon his shoulder again, and burst into a flood of tears.

"What is it, dearest? What ails you?" he asked, tenderly, caressing the flowing tresses that fell in wild confusion about her shoulders.

"You have made me confess what I should not have confessed," she sobbed. "My good father will not approve of this, and besides, this is no time for such proceedings."

"Is it not, darling?" and a smile wreathed the mouth of the young man. "Don't you know that we must have a wedding here now, in order to keep up appearances?"

"A what, sir?"

"A wedding, to be sure. Kyle Bernard, as you know, declared that you should this night become his bride, and those infernal savages, who think I am Kyle Bernard, are waiting, and growing impatient, for the ceremony to be performed."

"I can not, sir; I can not," she moaned, her cheeks paling.

The captain slipped his arm around her waist, and drew her closer to him, as he whispered:

"Adalyn, dear Adalyn, as you value your freedom and your life, do nothing to provoke the suspicions of those infernal dogs. They are expecting a marriage, and it will not do to omit it. Or, should it be omitted, I would have to make some explanation to them, when, beyond a doubt, they would all gather around me, and detect my true character. If you love me, Adalyn, become mine at once."

"But my father—he would not approve of such a course."

"Listen, love, and I will show you your mistake," said he, pleasantly, holding her closely to him, as though fearful that she might escape him. "I told Mr. Grey that I would rescue his daughter within three days, on condition that I might claim her hand as a reward, and he gave his consent. So, you see, your consent is all that lies between us and liberty. Father Villaires is ready now, and I wait your decision. Do you refuse?"

"No, no; take me as I am," she answered, drying her tears, and smiling so sweetly on him that his heart fairly leaped.

"But first tell me, Mr. Wayne," she added, "why it is that

you bear such a striking resemblance to that villain of all villains?"

"Not now, dearest. At some other time I will explain."

And with this he arose from the bench and led the fair captive out to the middle of the floor, where Father Villaires was awaiting them with an open book in his hands. The timid creature crept closer to the side of her manly protector, as she noticed the dark, greedy looks bestowed upon her by the five Indians, who had paused in their walk, and stood staring at the bridal pair.

"Gather around, warriors, and witness the marriage," was the command of the supposed Bernard, and the couple took their places before the old priest to be united in matrimony.

And there, in that lone mountain hut, while the tempest was raging fearfully without, while the thunder roared and the lightning flashed and the driving winds rushed howling through the gloomy valley—then and there the words were uttered that joined two willing hearts together for life. To Adalyn, young and unaccustomed to society as she was, this was a serious step, and she trembled and faltered when the sacred vows were exchanged, which the dusky guard thought quite natural, inasmuch as she was being united to a man she detested.

But her brave protector calmed her fears, whispered words of love in her ear, which, in spite of the dangers that still surrounded her and hers, caused every pulse in her being to leap and throb with thrills of pleasure, and he told her that if she cared for him, she was not doing wrong, and she, believing implicitly every word he said, clung closer to him until their lives were linked together by the man of God. Then, turning abruptly about, after the old priest had blessed them, Captain Wayne led his lovely young bride back to the rude bench, while the priest returned the sacred volume to its proper place, and the quintette guard resumed their slow, indefatigable walk backward and forward across the floor, and all was the same as before, save that two happy souls were bound together by the nuptial knot, and were happy in each other's love. Happy, though their acquaintance had been such a limited one, for their affections had been exchanged

long before this meeting among the mountains, and even before they had exchanged words.

Suddenly there was a lull in the storm outside. Then there came a bright gleam of lightning—brighter than any that had yet been seen, so dazzling, so blinding, that every occupant of the hut started involuntarily, and the light of the wax candles paled. Close in its wake followed a terrific peal of thunder, that roared and crashed amid the towering peaks, and shook the hermit's puny mansion until it seemed on the point of crumbling to the earth.

"Some tree is riven to its roots," predicted the ranger, when the last echo of the deafening sound was dying away.

As he spoke, he turned toward Adalyn. What was his surprise to see her sitting silently there, with one hand pressed over her eyes, and her face as white and ghastly as death!

"Adalyn," he cried, in alarm, "what is the matter? Are you frightened?"

"Oh, Roger," she gasped, "I—I saw my father's face."

"Your father's face? What do you mean?"

"His face! I saw it in that flash of lightning! I saw it as plainly as I ever did! Oh, my dear, dear father! I feel that I shall never see him again in this world!"

"My poor little Adalyn!" said the captain, pityingly, as he pillowed her head upon his bosom, "do not let that trouble you. You are excited, and you only imagined that you saw his face in the lightning. Cheer up; you shall be restored to him before morning."

CHAPTER XI.

THE VIAL OF VENGEANCE.

CAPTAIN ROGER WAYNE really supposed he had killed his father when he had struck him down so unceremoniously in the little glade under the cliff. The blow of the heavy gunstock was truly a tremendous one, and, as Kyle Bernard sunk beneath it without so much as a murmur, Roger was justified

in believing that it had deprived him of every spark of life his body contained.

But, as everybody is subject to mistakes, so was Roger mistaken.

The renegade wore a thick, padded head-dress, which had been made to suit himself, and which alone saved his life. The butt of the gun, in coming in contact with the head-dress, had only stunned him, instead of crushing his head as the youth supposed it had.

He lay for a long time insensible, however, wavering, no doubt, between life and death. Gleam after gleam lit up the surroundings, and revealed his motionless form and calm, upturned face as he lay there at the foot of the high precipice, where the sparkling cascade came leaping down among the rocks to dash its silver spray on his cold, rigid face, and where, for one hour, death hovered dark and threatening around his grassy bed.

The storm had burst upon the mountains in all its fury. The rain came down in torrents, drenching the unconscious man to the skin, and swelling the tiny cascade till it roared in its mad rush down the steep descent. The black heavens were ablaze with lightning and the air was filled with the thunder's noise, while among the rocky peaks and adown the mountain slope, through gloomy gorge and dark ravine, the fierce winds swept furiously along, whistling, shrieking, howling and roaring, like wild and vicious animals fighting desperately and goaded to madness.

And, insensible to the rain and all the din occasioned by the conflicting elements, Kyle Bernard still lay stretched upon the ground, half buried in water.

At last, however, a long-continued flash illumines the vicinity, and reveals him in a different attitude. He is now sitting bolt upright, and is gazing vacantly about, unable to comprehend his situation. The continual dash of water upon him had brought him to, and no sooner had he opened his eyes than he started up to a sitting posture and glared wildly around.

"Am I in the infernal regions?" he cried, hoarsely, terrified by the din of the tempest that was raging around him, "or have I been cast upon some dark island on the river of Death

before reaching the other shore?" and with a heart almost standing still he tried to collect his scattered senses.

"My head, it feels as though it were bursting open," he groaned, raising his hand to the designated portion of his person. "What does it mean? Where have I been? Where am I now? and where am I destined to be hereafter? Ten thousand furies!" he ejaculated, a moment later, as he continued to examine himself. "Curse me if I am not almost naked! Somebody has robbed me of my clothing. Somebody has stripped me, and— What can this mean? My hunting-shirt is gone, my leggings are missing, I am minus my moccasins, and even my head-dress has disappeared."

He felt his cold limbs and body, and shuddered.

"Am I dead?" he cried, in a faint, abstracted sort of a way, and he stretched his naked arms out and groped blindly around for something that would tell him he was not. "Truly I feel as though I were dead. Do spirits of the other world go naked? Yes, they do—evil spirits do, and I am an evil one!"

As yet he was not fully conscious. He scarcely heard the noise of the storm; he scarcely felt the rain nor saw the lightning. He was dizzy, half blind, and considerably muddled.

"Who am I? Am I Kyle Bernard? or am I some other person?" he asked himself in a strange, idiotic manner.

Immediately a deep, guttural voice near him replied:

"Thou art another person; thou art Conrad Wayne!"

Like a flash the affrighted villain leaped to his feet, glaring wildly around him like a stag at bay. Some one had spoken to him from out the darkness. Who could it be? Who was so near him and yet unseen? Was the air filled with imps of darkness who were to torture and mock him throughout all eternity?

"Who spoke to me?" he cried, in a fierce whisper, groping about and trying to penetrate the heavy gloom with his rolling, bloodshot eyes. "Who was it? Some one said I was *not* Kyle Bernard, but Conrad Wayne. Was it a demon who spoke? Does everybody know me? Is everybody acquainted with my real name?"

"Yes, everybody; ha! ha! ha!" again uttered that deep,

mocking voice, this time so near him that he jumped clear off the ground, with a low cry of alarm, at the same time feeling for a weapon but finding it not. His arms, as well as his clothing, were gone.

"Who is it? what is it?" he almost screamed. "'Tis the second time the invisible mocker has spoken to me. If I am not already dead I am doomed, that is certain."

"Ay, doomed!" growled that same invisible speaker, in those same hollow-sounding, derisive accents.

This time the horrified wretch could not utter a word. He began to feel faint and cold, and he stood as if rooted to the spot, waiting in speechless terror for the result of the mysterious affair. Rigid as a statue, and resembling one in his almost naked state, he stood there in an attitude of extreme fright, the storm playing around him in mad glee, and the driving winds shrieking like ten thousand furious demons among the rocky heights.

For several minutes thus, and then gradually to his disordered mind his lost faculties returned.

Gradually dawned upon his bewildered senses a faint comprehension of his true position, and a part of the mystery was cleared.

He saw the glittering cascade now, as it leaped down its almost perpendicular course, and the basin wherein it fell, and they struck him as objects quite familiar to him. He examined the vicinity, too, when the lightning afforded him the opportunity, and he beheld the frowning cliffs, the towering crags, the swaying trees, and every thing that was in the open glade in which he stood, and nothing that went to make up the picturesque scene was unknown to him.

"I am in the grassy glade where falls the silvery mountain stream," he said, to himself. "I remember, now, how I came here. The girl fainted there in the hut, and I came to procure some water with which to revive her. I don't believe I returned. No, I am certain I did not. What came over me? what happened then? I only remember coming here, and stooping over to dip up some water, and then all became blank. I can recall nothing that occurred after that. By thunder! I believe somebody must have struck me and knocked me senseless. This excruciating headache and that painful

protuberance on the rear portion of my cranium, go to prove that violence has been committed on my person, but why the dunces have deprived me of my clothing is a puzzle. This rain is chilling; I am cold. I will try and make my way back to the house, for it is useless to stand here trying to explain this dark affair. But stay!" he exclaimed, pausing and casting a speedy glance around, and looking half expectant, half-doubtful. "Did not I hear a voice a few moments since? Was not some unseen person speaking to me from out the darkness?"

"But, no," he added the next instant, "that could hardly have been real. It was only an insane imagination of my muddled brain. Thanks to my lucky stars, I am still among the living, and I shall remain so in spite of all opposition." And without more ado he was about to leave the spot.

But here, as if purposely to belie his mental conclusions, that strange, startling voice was again heard.

This time it was directly in front of him, and was even more deep and solemn than before, and the words it uttered were these:

"Conrad Wayne, beware. Thou shalt yet die by the hand of thy victim!"

The astounded desperado staggered back with a cry of dismay.

That warning again!—that terrible warning, uttered in that deep, solemn, yet derisive tone which had been ringing in his ears ever since the early part of the previous night. Would he never be free from it? But he knew he would not. Must he be dogged to his death by the ghost of the man he had murdered? But he shrunk from answering himself in the dread words that rose up in his mind.

"Conrad Wayne, beware. Thou shalt yet die by the hand of thy victim!"

He reeled in his tracks, and again forgetting how peculiarly he was situated, felt for a weapon with which to defend himself.

His hair felt as though it were standing on end; an icy chill crept through every vein in his body, and the cold perspiration started out upon his forehead and about his pallid lips as though his death-sentence were being read to him.

Kyle Bernard could have been more certain that Alfred Grey was a dead man had he seen him burned at the stake, and since the ruins of the destroyed cabin had fallen in over the defenseless head of his old rival, and he heard the prophetic words addressed to him in that hollow, sepulchral voice beneath the black, smoldering remains, he was firm in his belief that he was followed, dogged, haunted by the spirit of the dead.

The lightning now revealed the dreaded specter to the shrinking ruffian. The large, Herculean proportions of Alfred Grey were visible then, as the gigantic hunter stood erect before him with folded arms and proud bearing. Distinctly he could see the apparition, standing silently there with gracefully poised figure, and stern, dignified look, as natural as life, he thought, as he recoiled and trembled from superstitious awe and fright.

He saw that well-remembered face; the face of him whom he had so cruelly wronged, white, cold and rigid in its marble-like calmness. He saw, too, those large hollow eyes, and he quailed and cringed like the guilty coward that he was before their burning gaze. Afraid of mortal foe he was not, but an immortal one was too much for his nerves, and especially the one in question.

The renegade tried to speak, but no sound escaped him. He thought of flight, but as if divining his thoughts the hunter, in solemn tones, said :

“Flee not from me, thou cringing cur, though darkness enshrouds the earth. Can not I see as well by night as by day? Then hold your ground and listen to the words that you must hear. Vile knave! your time has come.”

“Spare me! oh, spare me!” groaned the wretch.

“Spare you,” was the rejoinder. “Did you spare Leah when you enticed her from home and friends with your deceptive, lying tongue, and then ruined and deserted her? Speak, base deceiver, ere I smite you to the earth!”

The so-called Kyle Bernard relapsed into the calmness of despair. No longer did he recoil from his persecutor, and cower beneath the burning gaze that was fastened upon him. The pallor of death was on his lips, and there was a wild, half-insane look in his red, glaring eyes.

Alfred Grey, on the other hand, was fast losing that look

of stony calmness which he wore when he so unexpectedly appeared before the bewildered renegade. Gradually, as he spoke of those bygone days, the memory of the fearful wrongs received at the hands of the man before him, and the fierce hatred he bore for him in consequence, began to gain the mastery, and as the conflict commenced beneath his folded arms his self-control slipped, as it were, from his grasp.

"Conrad Wayne, cut-throat, assassin, traitor and deceiver, I have come to you to-night to avenge the woman you so cruelly wronged ; my lost, lost Leah !"

Alfred Grey leaped like a tiger upon his assailant. Both were powerful men, and both struggled desperately for victory.

"Coward, you shall die !" hissed the renegade.

"Villain, you shall die !" thundered the hunter.

These were the last words either contestants ever uttered, and in these last words they both spoke an awful truth !

Just then, while the angry exclamations were yet trembling upon their lips, there came a sudden lull in the storm, and the black clouds above them parted. There was a blinding gleam—a crooked tongue of lightning darting down through the opening in the clouds—a jet of living fire sweeping down into the glade like a flaming sword—an awful, deafening crash, prolonged and terrific, as if the very world were being rent asunder—and all was over.

But where are the combatants ? There comes another flash of lightning, and as we look again upon the scene, stretched upon the ground side by side, and as silent as the rugged crags around them, lie the bitter enemies, and former rivals, Alfred Grey and Conrad Wayne ! Side by side, in the cold embrace of death, they rest, stricken down by the hand of God while they were seeking each other's lives—destroyed in a moment by him who hath said, "Vengeance is mine."

CHAPTER XII.

CUNNING AND COURAGE.

YES, it was truly a brief acquaintance that preceded the marriage of Captain Wayne and our heroine, but both saw the necessity for taking the step, and besides they loved each other with a love that was deep, passionate and sincere, and were more than willing to take the step, which the young ranger argued was requisite to their safety. His ruse was not yet completed, however, and when he looked upon the five large, muscular, well-armed Pawnees, as they walked the floor with firm, tiger-like tread, he realized how much was yet undone, and put his wits to work to form a plan of escape.

And when he looked fondly down upon her, who had given him her heart and hand, and saw that she still looked troubled, he wound his arm around her and kissed her.

"Cheer up, darling," he whispered, encouragingly. "Don't be despondent now, since you have borne up so bravely through the trials you were compelled to endure, while under the surveillance of your merciless captor. He will never trouble you more. Believe me, I would willingly sacrifice my life for you, and as I have deceived the red rascals thus far, I am confident that success will attend my efforts, to keep them in that state until we are free. Trust in me, sweet one, and all will result favorably."

"It is not that—oh, it is not that," she cried.

"Not that, Adalyn? Pray tell me then, what troubles you?" he said, tenderly and curiously.

"That face," she replied. "My father's face which I so plainly saw in that bright gleam of lightning."

"It was fancy, dearest, nothing more than fancy."

"No, no, no! it was real. I could not have been deceived. I saw his face, pale and ghastly, as plainly as I ever saw it in my life, and I can but feel that my poor father is no more."

The young man tried in vain to make her believe that her excited brain had conceived the imaginary vision. She looked

gratefully up at him, and told him she hoped that what he said was true, but she knew it was not.

"Captain Wayne," said she, in a husky whisper, "I feel that my dear father is dead. I believe he has been stricken down by lightning. But I will not trouble you with so much weeping," she added, bravely, dashing away the tears that wet her soft, velvet cheeks, and long, silken lashes.

And the ranger, seeing how useless would be further attempts to console her, adroitly changed the topic of conversation.

Presently, when the tempest was over ; when the lightning-gleams were only seen far away in the south-western sky, and the rumbling of the thunder sounded as distant as in the early part of the evening ; when the wind had subsided, and the moon was smiling down through the straggling clouds, that were scudding across her pale disk, Roger turned to his fair companion and abruptly said :

"Adalyn, can you tell me whether Kyle Bernard possessed any influence over the Indians or not ?"

"He certainly did," she replied, with a puzzled air.

"They regarded him as their leader, then ?"

"Nay, more. They called him chief, and obeyed implicitly his slightest command."

"Good," uttered the soldier.

And then, after sitting for some time in silent meditation, he drew a long breath and turned toward the girl.

"Adalyn, do you remain quietly here for a few minutes, while I proceed to carry out the rest of the ruse I have commenced. I have hit upon a plan by the execution of which we may be able to rid ourselves of these savages, and as I have thus far so successfully duped them, I have reason to believe that the rest will be easy. It is now, I judge, past midnight, and whatever we do should be done without further waste of time. Therefore, you will remain here until I see what can be done, and you will appear dejected as though you had no thought of escape."

This was all he said. He sprung up ; and without another word to anybody, walked hastily toward the door, Adalyn's great black eyes beaming with a world of love and pride as they followed his noble, manly form.

With one fond, reassuring glance back at his beautiful bride, he passed out, and closed the door that was to separate them only for a short space of time.

Once more outside, under cover of the darkness, he heaved a sigh of relief, and thanked Heaven that his disguise had not been penetrated. He was supposed to be the veritable Kyle Bernard, and if, as Adalyn had asserted, Kyle Bernard possessed the influence of a respected chief over the savage band, he was confident that he and the maiden would soon be breathing the fresh mountain air with a delicious sense of freedom.

There was no occasion for loss of time, and no sooner was he outside in the wet grass, than he walked briskly around the corner of the house, toward the bivouac of Pawnees. He saw that the camp-fire had almost died out, and the Indians, now that the fury of the storm was spent, were wrapping their blankets and robes about them, with the obvious intention of passing the remainder of the night in sleep.

Without hesitation, or any misgivings, the disguised ranger walked boldly across the area toward the base of the precipice. Stopping within a few yards of the encampment, he cried out:

“Warriors!”

The Indians, who had not noticed his approach, all paused at the sound of his voice, and instantly a score of painted faces, lit up by the flickering light of the dying fire, were turned full upon him. Captain Wayne kept his distance lest some one in the party should see through his little stratagem, and bring the whole truth to light.

“Warriors,” he repeated, as every man looked expectantly at him, “I find that we are not to be molested any more by our pale-face enemies, and such being the case, you are aware that your presence here is not absolutely necessary. I have come out here to tell you that you need not remain until morning. I wish you to mount your horses without delay, and resume your journey homeward.”

For some moments the Indians hesitated, and then one of them asked, in pretty plain English:

“Will our chief stay here?”

“I will remain in the wigwam of the old pale-face, till the

coming of the morn," was the rejoinder. "I will remain there with my young bride. There is no danger. Nothing will befall us if we are left here alone, therefore not a man need stay behind. Go ye, every one, to the village, and tell them I will be there on the morrow with a wife, and it is my wish that they make a grand parade in honor of her arrival. Tell them I will be there before the setting of the sun, and will bring with me a beautiful prize—she who is known near and far as the Lily of the Lake. Go, one and all, but do not fail to leave two of the best horses for myself and my captive."

"And Wongola will ask the old sachem to prepare a feast for the squaw of his favorite chief," said he who had first spoken.

"Thanks, Wongola," returned the pretended chief, in a tone of approval. "You are the bravest of the brave, and kind to your chieftain."

He said no more, but turned his back upon the deluded red-men with delightful emotions, leaving them to obey his command without further orders, as he was sure they would do. Retracing his steps over the level space, he could not help reflecting with thrills of joy, that it was himself alone, with the aid of nobody, who was loosening the fetters of captivity that bound the fair Adalyn to those inhuman scoundrels, and as he thought of it, he felt a secret pleasure in assuring himself that she would love him all the more for his bravery, and the proof of his devotion to her.

When he reëntered the hut, full of joy occasioned by these brilliant prospects of early liberty, Adalyn and Father Villaires glanced up at him and noted with gladsome hearts his bright, hopeful look. At first the girl felt constrained to rush to his side, but remembering that she was playing a part, she turned away with a wild, despairing look, while Father Villaires threw dark indignation in the gaze he fastened upon the new-comer.

Noticing them with a smile and a frown blended, our hero turned to the five faithful Pawnees, who were even yet walking backward and forward guarding the captive with untiring patience and characteristic fidelity. They paused as he addressed them.

He spoke to them just as he had spoken to the main party outside. When he had finished they glanced dubiously at the captive and at the old priest, but without a word of remonstrance or question they glided over the threshold out into the darkness to join their brethren.

Five minutes later, and twenty-five mounted Indians rode out of the valley in single file, and then galloped over the prairie in a northerly direction toward the Pawnee valley!

The three friends were alone and free!

"Oh, Roger," cried Adalyn, when she felt that they were safe, and overwhelmed with joy she sunk into the outstretched arms of her brave young husband, where she lay panting upon his breast with a delicious feeling of rest and security.

"You have done well, my son," said the priest, quietly pressing the hand of the captain. "You have accomplished that which reflects great credit upon your cunning and courage and your disposition to do good toward a fellow-creature. God bless you!"

And indeed the ranger's ruse was a complete success.

The daring young hero stood erect in the middle of the room, smiling gratefully as the wise old hermit congratulated him, and dropping a tear or two on the flowing tresses of her who was weeping for joy in his arms. He was thankful for this happy *dénouement*, and that he had been the humble instrument employed in bringing it about. The Indians were gone, and all that was left for the whites to do was to return home, rejoicing at the termination of their troubles.

And the happy lovers did rejoice, as they sat side by side conversing with throbbing hearts, until the old priest suddenly cried out:

"Hark, my friends! Some one comes!"

Heavy footsteps were heard outside. Some one was really coming!—hastily approaching the house! Adalyn turned pale, and Captain Wayne jumped up and seized his gun.

There was a heavy jar on the door. It was burst rudely open, and immediately following the act a man of burly form sprung over the threshold and stood like the lord of all before the astonished trio, in his bobtailed green, his corduroy knee-breeches, black stockings and shabby hat, with his red hair clinging in wet masses to his brow.

CHAPTER XIII.

FATALITY AND FINALE.

THE new-comer was none other than Larry O'Lynn.

The Irishman witnessed the proceedings of the last hour, having commenced a reconnoissance of the hermit's hut and the Indian encampment. He had distinctly heard the command of the pretended chief, spoken in such a firm, steady voice to the fierce crew, and as he observed how it was received, he came very near springing up, with his usual impulsiveness, and huzzaing.

He had watched the supposed chief till he reëntered the house, and shortly thereafter had seen the five unsuspecting warriors come out and join their comrades. Then there was a confused jabbering and a mounting of horses, and, laughing heartily to himself, he had seen them ride away, leaving two of their best horses in the valley.

Then it was that he rushed to the cabin and alarmed its inmates by bolting in upon them so unceremoniously.

No sooner had the queer fellow darted into the house and banged the door behind him, than he burst out into a roar of laughter, tore his hat from his head, flung it up to the ceiling, and caught it on the end of his club as it descended.

"Hurroo fur the cap'in!" he yelled, beginning to dance a reel before an amazed audience.

"Why, it is Larry," said the ranger and Adalyn in the same breath, the former dropping his rifle and the latter her sudden fright.

"The same, at yer sarvice," returned the Galwegian, his blue eyes twinkling as he placed his hand on his breast and executed a profound bow to the trio of individuals before him.

Captain Wayne smiled.

"How came you here?" he asked, "and why are you so merry?"

"Me laigs brung me here, plaze yer honor, an' I faile a leetle merry because iv the thrick yez played on thim Injuns,

jist. Och, me b'y, an' it's a broth iv a b'y yez are, too, that was a nate thrick yez performed a minnit ago. I c'u'dn't 'ave dud much betther meself. Be the siven candhels, cap'in, yer a ginevine jewel."

"Well, let that pass—"

"It has passed, begorra, an' that's why I'm so jolly. Be Mol' Kelley's milk-pail, cap'in, ye've dud well."

"But, Larry," cried Adalyn, suddenly breaking away from her champion and rushing eagerly to the side of the Galwegian, "Larry," placing one trembling little hand on his shoulder and gazing up into his eyes with an earnest, beseeching look, "tell me, where did you leave my father?"

Larry's countenance fell, and the poor girl observing it, turned away with a low moan.

"My dear, dear father, I know he is dead!"

Larry groaned, and looked down at the floor.

"Don't, don't!" he pleaded, earnestly. "I can't, indade I can't. Ye'll be killin' me nixt, ye will. Let me out, I'm goin' away--I'm goin' home! I won't sthay here anither minnit, I won't."

"Stay, Larry," remonstrated the girl. "I want you to tell me all, now. I have composed myself, and can hear all that you can tell me, unmoved. Proceed, and leave nothing unsaid. Tell me all that has happened."

She stood up before him, calm, quiescent, tearless, but pale as death.

"With renewed courage, Larry said:

"Faix, now, I hope ye won't scrame, nor cry, nor faint, cause av ye does I'll sthop in a jiffy."

"I shall do neither," was the low, firm response.

"Then I'll not be tarryin' any longer. Yer daddy *is* dead hency. He was kilt be the lightnin', sure, not more'n half an hour ago."

"I was confident of that," calmly interrupted the girl, while the venerable priest, aside to Roger, remarked:

"Strange, that she should thus mysteriously be apprised of his death at the very instant that witnessed his fall."

"Afther the cap'in, there," Larry resumed, "lift us alone in our hidin'-place near the outlet, an' wint out to reconnoiter the primises of that ould gintleman's residence, Mистер Grey

he sat there fur a long time widout sayin' a single blis-id wurrid. He didn't stir a muscle at all, an' w'u'dn't listen to me jargon wid which I was thryin' to kape meself awake, only wance I haired him mumblin' over sumthin' 'bout a gipsy an a dhrame an' a fiend of some place, an' about bein' sthruck down be the hand of what's-his-name, an' sich foolishness. I kep' shady an' paid no attintion to him, till at last he turned to me an' sid, 'Larry,' siz he, layin' iv his hand 'pon me shou der, an' his eyes luk'd like coals iv fire, too, 'Larry,' siz he, 'I want yez to sthay here alone fur awhile.' I didn't care so much, mind ye, fur sthayin' alone as I did to have him l'ave me there by meself.

"He tould me he was goin' out, an' whin I axed him where was he goin', he sid it was not the likes av me that should be axin' him that same quistion. I persisted, though, an' at last he tould me he didn't know where he was goin', an' he jabers it's Bridget O'Lynn's b'y, frum Galway, as was sthruck mighty forcibly wid the idea that he was goin' crazy, to be sure. He tuk some white paper frum his pocket thin, an' sed how't he was goin' to write somethin' on it to the cap'in. He sthruck a light—a wee bit iv a light—an' thin he began to write like a sthrake iv lightnin' on the white paper.

"Whin he was done writin' he put the pincil in his pocket an' handed the letther to me. 'Larry,' siz he, an' I tell yez his voice was awful deep, an' holler, an' solemn, like a voice frum the grave, 'Larry,' siz he, 'av I niver return to yez—av I die or be kilt be sunbody an' you remain unharrum'd—give ye this message to Captain Roger Wayne.' I tell yez it made me feel kinder quare whin he spoke iv never returnin' to me, but I couldn't say a wurrid to save me nick, an' so I tuck the message in silence, promisin' to obey. An' then he lift me. He slid out like a spook widout sp'akin' anither syllable to me, an' divil a sight iv him was in sight in the twinklin' iv a toad-stool. I suspected that the rash man had gone out to hunt up that Bernard, or rinegade as ye call him and so I follered him. It was dark—dark as a black nager in a cellar at midnight wid an extinguished light huntin' a black cat that wasn't there. Ye may smile, cap'in, but I tell ye it was all that an' more too, an' rainin' like blazes, but I follered me masther in spite of all, and promised meself that

I w'u'dn't let him do iny thing reckless if I could prevint it.

"It's the private opinyun of Moll Kelley's bean that Mither Grey started wid the intintion iv spyin' round the hut a trifle, but av that was the case, he must have lost his way in the dark. I managed to kape in his wake be strainin' me peepers clare out iv me head siveral times, whin the lightnin' flashed, till he sthopped purty soon in that open place where the wee sthrame iv wather kims runnin' over the precipus. Ye know where it is? Yes? Well that was where he sthopped, and I sthopped, too, an' hid, so that he wouldn't see me. Whin I see'd him ag'in, what div yez think? he was gthandin' face to face with Kyle Bernard, an'—"

"Stop!" cried the ranger, at this point. "You don't mean Kyle Bernard? I was positive that I killed him."

"Ye missed yer guess, thin," declared Larry, "fur 'twas him as sure as Moll Kelley jilted a certain person in this shanty. It was that same rinegade, yer honor, and he was almost as naked as our forefathers in paradise, too, an' I guess yez was the cause iv that, cap'in, 'cause ye've got on his duds. Well, Mither Grey nearly scairt him out iv the few wits he had left, an' that wasn't many, mind ye, as the divil had jist kin to life an' was hardly sinsible yit. They soon grappled, howsumiver, an' then it was the lightnin' struck 'em. Och, wirrah! it was an awful flash! Mither of Moses! it was a terrible crash! I smelt brimstone fur awhile, an' felt as though I'd faint, but divil a faint was there. Both iv the men war kilt, me friends, an' they're both lyin' out there now, blacked an' mangled be the flamin' sword that was lifted ag'inst them, at a moment whin it was laste expicted, be the avenging gel."

Larry dropped his head upon his breast, that he might not witness the grief which he believed would overcome the poor girl as he finished his characteristic statement.

But Adalyn's teeth were hard-set, and she firmly repressed the choking sob that rose for egress, while our hero bent over and whispered words of encouragement in her ear.

Larry produced the message which Alfred Grey had written to Captain Wayne, and the young soldier retired to one corner of the room to read it.

CAPTAIN ROGER WAYNE—With a presentiment that my end is near—with a strange feeling that I shall never again address you verbally—I seize upon this opportunity of sending you a written message, chiefly to explain to you how I learned so much about your parentage and your exact place of residence during your early childhood.

“In the beginning it is the old, old story. Conrad Wayne and I, though firm friends in our youth, became, in early manhood, rivals in love, and consequently enemies. We lived in New Orleans, and the object of our affections was a Creole lady of regal beauty.

“I was the favored suitor; I wooed, won and wedded the Creole, and certainly no man ever loved woman more fervently than I loved Leah. Our wedding was a grand affair, and when I led her to the fine home prepared for her, I was the proudest man in the city. Conrad Wayne also married a short time afterward, his bride being a modest, handsome maiden, who deserved a more fitting companion in life than that man. I fancied, and I still fancy, that he married only to make it appear that he was indifferent to my triumph.

“One year after their union his wife presented him with a son, and it was about five years after the birth of this child that an incident occurred which foreshadowed the future. Returning home unexpectedly from a business trip up the river, I found there, in close conversation with Leah, the man who had competed for her hand—Conrad Wayne, your unworthy sire—talking familiarly to her, and she seeming well pleased. I showed him the door, without ceremony, and pushed him rudely out, and reproached Leah in strong terms. She begged to be forgiven, declaring that she had thought no harm in receiving an old friend who had casually called on her. I was only too willing to forgive her, but I cautioned her against the wicked man, and charged her to receive him never again in my house.

“It was but a few days after this event that we were blessed with our first and only child—Adalyn. We almost worshiped her, and I do still, but strange to say I feel that I will never see her again on earth. One morning, six months after the birth of our child, my Leah was missing. She had eloped with Conrad Wayne at last, leaving me alone with our infant daughter. The same day I received a cold taunting letter from Wayne, in which he coolly told me that Leah had preferred him from the first; that she had married me only for my money; that they could no longer live separated, and would be soon wedded and happy in each other's love.

“Stunned by this great blow, I was overpowered with grief, but I soon composed myself and reviewed the whole affair calmly. I set out in pursuit of the runaway couple, and at last found my poor wife in the city of St. Louis, alone—deserted—disgraced—dying!

“Never shall I forget that meeting. I never recall it without the most sincere pity for that beauteous victim, and an indomitable desire to avenge her. She was comparatively innocent. Her fault was a touch of vanity and love of praise, which that monster had employed as the instrument to lure her from her home, and succeeded. He mercilessly deserted her in St. Louis, and there, with a broken heart and a fever fastened upon her vitals, I found her, repenting when it was too late. She craved my forgiveness, and I freely granted it; but she said she was not worthy of me, and was glad that she was dying. She clung to me to the end, and with her last

breath declared that she loved none but me, and the God before whom she must so soon appear.

"I buried her, and for some years thereafter I lived alone with my infant daughter, while the wife of Conrad Wayne, never hearing more of her husband, lived alone with his little boy. At last, however, it was rumored that he was in the West, leagued with the Indians. I repaired thither, partly to find him, and partly because I preferred solitude to society. When first I saw you, I believed you were related to the man whom I wished to find; but when I heard your name I knew that you were his son.

"A short time since I had a dream. I dreamed a gipsy hag told my fortune in these few words:

"A fiend of Hades is thy deadly foe, and ere many moons have come and gone thou shalt meet him face to face; but in the moment of thy triumph, both will be stricken down by the hand of God!"

"I feel that in that dream I have been warned that my end is near. And now, captain, I would ask a favor. If you rescue my darling child, and Heaven grant that you may, marry her, love her, and treat her better, I beg of you, than your father did her mother. One thing more and I will close. Go to the spot where stood my cabin, and in the south-east corner dig down into the ground three feet. There you will find five large earthen jars, filled with gold, the remains of the riches I once possessed. Appropriate this for the married life of yourself and Adalyn. ALFRED GREY."

With a look of sadness and awe the youthful captain folded the paper, and carefully concealed in his bosom the message which he did not wish his young bride to see just then.

At an early hour on the following morning the little party of whites repaired to the picturesque spot where the crystal cascade tumbled off the precipice, and there, just as Larry O'Lynn had left them, were found the lifeless and mangled bodies of the ill-fated Alfred Grey and Conrad Wayne. Though up to this time Adalyn had borne her great sorrow as only she could have borne it, she now threw herself upon the silent corpse of her father, and wept long and bitterly for the loved one who was no more.

The bodies were decently interred. Side by side, in the cold, dark ground were laid the former friends, and later, rivals in love and deadly enemies; side by side, the fiend and the Christian sleep in peace far away in that wild mountain glen, there to rest until the last trump shall call them from their silent graves.

After dropping a few tears on the damp earth that covered their mortal remains, our trio of friends took leave of the good old priest, and leaving him there to the companionship of his

books, the birds, the flowers and squirrels, they rode out of the valley, and journeyed leisurely homeward, Captain Wayne having removed the paint from his handsome face, and donned the habiliments that were more becoming to him as a military officer.

In due time they arrived at their destination, and there they learned that, on the night which witnessed the abduction of our heroine, the fort had been attacked by a large band of Pawnees, but the assailants were met with such determined repulse that they had drawn off with heavy loss, and abandoned the attack. That evening there was a grand feast and dancing at the fort in honor of the daring young captain and his beautiful bride. All agreed that the match was a perfect one, and as numbers of young men looked upon the handsome, flushed face of our hero, they envied him his good fortune, and felt that they would be willing to endure all that he had passed through for such a priceless treasure as she who leaned so fondly on his arm.

The ranger did not show to Adalyn the letter from her father until several days after their return to the fort.

The buried gold mentioned in the message was secured, and Roger Wayne was a rich man. Shortly after, he resigned his position at the fort, took leave of his rangers, and removed to St. Louis, where he is now living contented and happy with his loved wife and beautiful children, which are "as olive-plants round about his table." Larry is with them there and will be to the last, proving a faithful servant to Captain Roger Wayne as he ever was to his former master, Alfred Grey.

THE END.

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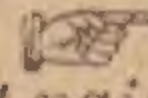
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